

THE SMART SET

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THE JANUARY "SMART SET"

Jack London will contribute what is probably his finest short story, entitled "When God Laughs," to the forthcoming number of *THE SMART SET*. Every reader will be on the qui vive for this really remarkable tale.

The novelette will be entitled

"BROKEN STATUES," By JULIEN GORDON

Mrs. Cruger's work is so well known that any comment is unnecessary. Certain it is that this story will add materially to her reputation as a writer.

William Hamilton Osborne, one of the most popular of the younger magazine writers, will be represented by a long story, called "The Taint o' the Lag"; and there will be a detective story by Burton E. Stevenson; a newspaper story by Frederick Orin Bartlett; a humorous story by W. H. G. Wyndham Martyn; a Creole story by M. E. M. Davis; a story of sentiment and realism by Katharine Metcalf Roof, and a New York boarding-house story by Algernon Tassin. In addition, there will be a delightful romantic one-act play, told in verse, by William C. de Mille and John Erskine, and an essay by Bliss Carman.

Clinton Scollard will contribute a ballad, and other poems will be by Aloysius Coll, Arthur Stringer, Theodosia Garrison, Elsa Barker, John Vance Cheney and Archie Sullivan.

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THE SHOULDER-KNOT

By Mrs. Henry Dudeney

IT was sleepy Summer-time and all the air was full of fluty sounds—swish of sea, tinkle of sea-bells, a running, fairy breeze. The hills stood on guard; vague, sweet outlines, all palpitating blue.

Aunt Ann Grimes crossed the farm-yard carrying a pail of water which splashed over the edge and fell in the dust; dust so hot, so fine and thirsty that the water dropped into it, not as liquid, but as a flash of silver light. Everything was sleepy; the yard dog languidly thumped his tail, a cat was voluptuously stretched on her side in full sunshine, cocks and hens went slowly scratching. And right before the long, gray house, with pasture and shingle and fine sand stretching between, waves were rolling in—little baby waves, each one seeming to suck a lip as it reached the shore.

It was a perfect day, a perfect scene—yet to Christine it seemed void. She was sitting in the veranda, staring mournfully out and drawing together her black and perfect brows. She was that rare thing—a perfectly lovely woman. Yet petty anxiety was making her fair face a plowed field, in delicate miniature. To be anxious, and about money—what a slur on the day! With a canker of this sort Nature, in her very best, is merely an affront. Christine hated the sun, frowned at the large, placid hills—that seemed to float in drifts of rose and blue—envied every nodding flower its gala toilette. For herself, she had not a best gown—and this was tragedy. For, without the petty vanity of the merely pretty woman, or the anguished egotism of the extremely plain one, she knew herself to be a beauty and longed

to play her part in a befitting manner—that would be only justice to Him who gave the gift.

She was poor, she was shabby, the future trembled and she considered herself the most badly treated creature on earth. This is the woeful way with twenty; at twenty, you take thistle-down cares and press them into service until they bear the semblance of solid tragedy. Christine sat mournful, yet, could she have seen the future, she might have grown gay. The immediate future was going to bring her grief of a most curious sort; one of those afflictions that money cannot cure.

However, we do not see the future—if we could, we should have the sense to cherish the present, which is always so much better than the future means to be. The present soon mellows into the past; in the future lies Death.

"Put down the pail, Aunt Ann Grimes, and come and talk," she called out presently. "I have a plan for our redemption."

"Redemption be beyond your power, dear heart," returned the other placidly and crossing the yard.

Aunt Ann Grimes was a serious woman and took words literally; that is, according to chapel standard.

"Oh, no, it isn't," Christine's face was lifting; her large eyes laughed. "Come and listen. Come along into the veranda."

The veranda, cool and stone-flagged, ran the whole length of the stone house. It was a touch of ease and gentility evidently added to the building as an afterthought, for it was an ancient house and bore bravely about it the whims of several generations.

Christine was sitting at a round table;

she had a penny account-book and a pencil, and for at least half an hour she had been busily occupied in writing down and scratching out.

Aunt Ann Grimes stepped in and lolled against a vine-twined pillar. She had a pleasant face, all crinkled and rosy, and most refreshingly plain. Looking at her you felt sure she had been spared complexities. She was a calm, domestic product and she had the comfortable body that betokens a simple mind.

Her sleeves were rolled up and her bodice was slightly open at the neck, in the manner of bustling, rustic women. For the rest, her brows and lashes were pale, serviceable brown and her scanty, pepper-and-salt-tinted hair took on the exact hue of her useful tweed-mixture skirt. There was no fanciful nonsense about Aunt Ann Grimes; she was a well-meaning, slow-witted body, indigenous to the soil and with a wonderful gift of cooking and scouring and scolding. She lolled against the post and folded her hands on her stomach and looked down at the girl with shy, admiring fondness.

"We are but two women," said Christine, with an air of brisk, clear-sighted business. "We cannot farm; to beg we are ashamed—to say nothing of the fact that there is no one to give or to lend us one penny. Midsummer rent is overdue, I have exactly twenty-one pounds in the bank, and I have the interest of a certain sum put aside for me which brings in ten shillings a week. Isn't that so?"

She stopped with a jerk. Her heart rushed to the hills, to the savagely beautiful and treacherous sea. Business was alien to her—yet one must live. To live was a most pitiful drag on one's freedom. She could feel in one breath the desire for a splendid, free, beggarly life, and the tragedy of not having beautiful garments to wear. A contradiction, an anomaly, an elusive, most magical problem—in other words, a true woman.

"Thet's jest about it," assented Aunt Ann Grimes, "an' I've turned the matter over in my mind an' set out our

sorry case afore the Lord until I'm sick. Theer ain't nothin' fer it but fer me ter take sarvice—I can pick an' pluck poultry an' dress up a pig toothsome wi' the best; an' fer you——"

"To die!" cried Christine, nodding, half laughing, yet on the verge of tears. "I know, I know! We have discussed it until I, too, am sick."

"Die! Ter goo an' live wi' your Aunt an' Uncle Luxmore!" said the old woman in vague amazement—while the young one was staring at the exquisite hills, and clenching her hands and setting her scarlet lips.

"What a prospect! My aunt, my uncle, their appalling daughters—my cousins! Did not they come down here in a body when he died?" She turned a white face toward a window and stared in at an empty, littered room. "Did they not smirch the whole countryside? They brought such an air of cheap culture and sham finery that I nearly died. No! I am free born."

She broke off, laughing crazily, and seized the other's hands.

"Dear Aunt Ann Grimes, forgive me. Your eyes are so round with wonder. You don't understand one word of what I am saying."

"You be rebellious, Christine—you allus wur. Though I can't say as I favored Mrs. Luxmore. But what be gooin' ter do, love, ef you wun't live wi' them in Lunnon? They've got a splendid home, so I've been telled."

"It would be funeral trappings to me, and I am trying to tell you what I am going to do. We will take paying guests." She patted the account-book. "I have been drawing up advertisements; nothing pleases me yet, but the true form will come. The house is large; we have butter, eggs, cream, poultry, beautiful scenery—everything for which the bosom of great London yearns. We will have paying guests and you can wait on them, with one of the village maids to help."

"Theer's Arethusa Miller jest left school. She be a handy gell, though wi' a trick o' pickin' an' stealin'. She stepped up ter give a hand when the

Luxmores was here, an' I cotched her wi' a finger an' thumb in a gooseberry tart."

"I would deliver up the parlor entirely and with joy," said Christine thoughtfully.

"Strangers'll spile the carpet an' scratch the chairs an' set theer boots on the rail o' the table, Christine. Your pore mother set store by thet room. It wur her pride an' comfort; she warn't happy, fer all she married a scholard an' gentleman. It niver pays ter marry out o' your rank o' life. Sims ter me as marriage be but a catch crop. I niver sowed it, thanks be ter Providence."

"I never propose to," said Christine, smiling. "That is, if heaven will afford me the alternative consolation of paying guests."

"The man don't walk who's good enough for 'ee, or beautiful enough," cried her aunt—who had the extravagant delight in beauty of the truly homely woman.

"Let us hope not. How I should detest a beautiful man! I like them rugged. I would mate with a mountain, or with the sea in a storm; nothing calmer could hold me for long. . . . Aunt Ann Grimes, there is a man coming in at this gate—as a deliberate challenge to our resolve of celibacy! And, so far as I can judge at this distance, he's anything but beautiful. He is lean and brown, his eyes seem to be starting out of his head—with sickness or madness, or both."

The new-comer struck seriousness into the tinkling day; he infused drama, he was eloquent of weariness, desire and struggle. He came from cities, from violence of living; he held no part with the good-tempered hills, with the little, lightly-breaking waves, with the bells of silly sheep and the song of June birds all afire with nesting-time. Christine sat up. Her heart, despite her, beat the faster. As for Aunt Ann Grimes, she merely surveyed the stranger as the languid collie dog surveyed him—with vague suspicion.

He came up, lifting his cloth cap, looking about him with that volup-

tuous approbation which the townsman bestows on pure country. The scene was perfect and he was an artist—his art taking the gift of words. Words were easy, gaudy—a passionate, wonderful storm with him. The world knew of him, the world of cities. Here, by the sea, in this primitive, exquisite place, no one had ever heard of anyone, unless it might be Shakespeare. The stranger had a shadowy idea that rustic people bracketed Shakespeare with Bunyan and the Bible. For himself, he regarded the Bible with profound respect as a marvelous literary production, but Bunyan he detested, because his blood was the very antithesis of everything that was cold, correct and Puritan.

He looked ardently about him as he approached the veranda and he saw all the things that he best loved; saw all the things that he assured himself made for perfect happiness, all the things he wanted, just the finishing touches which he had been denied—or, rather, which he had denied himself. What a fool he had been! He had tasted Paris and starved himself of Arcady. He must change his diet.

He saw the things he best loved. A long, gray house, with a vine and with pensive wistaria twining her pale purple arms about it. He saw great, rambling buildings, a farmyard deep in golden straw, a dovecote, an indolent collie, a cat stretched in the sun. He adored the cat—as a type of the true voluptuary; an animal conserving all the delicate, sensuous traditions of the ancients. No wonder the Egyptians worshiped cats. When he went back to London—if ever he went back, which at the moment seemed impossible—he would start a new religion of the cat. It was an age of new religions; people were in a fever for quaint faiths. There was one cat on her side in the sun, lying in dust, yet on the edge of golden straw; there was another sitting on the lichened wall, a black cat with extraordinarily fine and fierce white whiskers. She was watching a brood of golden

ducklings with the most elaborate air of cruelty. The new-comer felt a sort of sympathy for her, a kinship; his eyes snapped; he gave a wry, odd twist of the right shoulder.

All these things he saw, and much more, in the brief space while he crossed from the badly hung farm gate to the glass-topped and vine-twined veranda. He had thought the place a perfect Eden, and here, suddenly meeting Christine's somber and inquiring glance, he found Eve.

She had risen, half in haughtiness, half wild surprise. He beheld a glorious and absolutely primitive creature. Here in the heart of the south country, such was the perversity of things, a perfect goddess lay perdue, while women of most indifferent charm, yet exquisite make-up, were posing as beauties on the pavements and in the ball-rooms of big cities.

A truly beautiful woman, of breathing flesh and blood, was extremely rare. None knew that better than he. There were plenty of beautiful women—of stone, of marble, of pigment, of devilishly ingenious words; all of the creations of that perplexing creature known as the artist. But an absolutely beautiful woman—as distinct from the merely pretty, the handsome, the good-looking or the plain, was in the nature of an astounding find. She was almost as rare and infinitely more agreeable than the positively ugly woman. He could find no flaw in this perfect jewel of a girl, this rustic precious stone—and he had dug her out all by himself. His blood bounded—with the exaltation of the discoverer. He felt for a moment as men must feel when they discover fresh facts concerning the Bible, or when they are on the track of the North Pole, or have run to earth some long-lost adventurer, or are on the edge of a great scientific discovery.

She was dark, and he had always adored dark women; blondes to him were as spring water is to the epicure in wines. There was no full quality to a blonde, unless she were red-

headed—and in that case there was usually the detriment of freckles. This girl was brunette with a white skin, with a wide, scarlet mouth; it was made more for kisses than for speech. Again, he hunched his shoulder; it was a little trick. She had those eyes which are neither gray nor black, yet both; eyes that are wayside pools, and they were fringed by thick lashes and arched by fine brows, as the pool is by waving sedges.

She was so beautiful that of course she was a fool; Nature never gave a woman more than one perfection. For example, how many brilliant women had he met, in his brief and meteoric course of letters, and they were all ugly. He recalled one, the most brilliant of all, a sculptor, with whose work he had been enchanted. And when, after taking pains, he had secured an introduction, he found her in a floppy mauve frock, with a large wart on a scraggy little throat, with her hips and her elbows sticking out beneath her absurdly limp draperies, like the broken ribs of an old umbrella.

This girl to whom he was on the point of speaking would certainly not be clever, nor would she be particularly devout. Devotion was a gift, an art—and all the nuns that he had seen about on the Continent and elsewhere were either ugly or foolish looking. Some of them had quite grotesque faces, like the corbels on an ancient church.

He hated to speak to her—or, rather, to make her speak; it would spoil the illusion. But he could not stand silent in her territory any longer, staring at that baleful, white-whiskered cat on the wall. She was watching each golden duckling with the air of a ghoul—the delightful creature. At last he said:

"I must apologize for my intrusion. I was not aware when I struck off from the road that the cart-track led to a house. And when I found that it did I ventured to come right on and ask for a drink of water."

This girl of most glorious beauty looked up at him searchingly; she

smiled—the most demure, the most ravishing lift of a lip. She was evidently neither fool nor gawky; he began to think that he had dipped aside into fairyland. But the old woman, lolling against the post, staring at him unblinkingly, most suspiciously, contradicted this illusion—she was the epitome of sane prose. He wanted to murder the old woman and so have the enchanted world to himself, the girl and the cat.

"Don't apologize," she said crisply. "I'm not at all sure that you may not prove to be the person I most need. Aunt Ann Grimes, will you kindly get this gentleman a drink?—milk, yes—and also some strawberries and thick cream. Then leave us alone to talk business."

She sat down. She patted the other end of the bench—this was a little trick of hers—a charming gesture of hospitality. He noticed what a long brown hand it was; there was race in that hand. Was it possible that she wasn't the farmer's daughter; that the old woman who had stumped off rather grudgingly was merely a servant? Yet she had distinctly said Aunt Ann Grimes. That in itself was an odd enough appellation; there was redundancy about it, a stilted comicality. It smelt of the footlights of a rustic curtain-raiser, with yokels in smock frocks drinking out of striped beer-mugs and rolling out quaint traditional songs.

Peter Bonsey, as he took the proffered seat on the bench, felt vaguely that he wanted to rub his eyes. He watched, as in a dream, the whisk of Aunt Ann Grimes's serviceable skirts. He watched her shoo away the white-whiskered cat without resentment—merely with wonder. The cat and the woman were alive, were of the commonplace everyday, just like everybody else. For the rest, great though his gift of words, he was struck into passing silence by the far greater gift of this girl's surpassing loveliness.

She was looking at him gravely, yet with malice aforethought, with youthful

and most deliciously suggested mirth. She held in one hand an ordinary penny account-book with lines, and in the other a pencil. He saw that a page and more of the book was scribbled all over and then scribbled out. She seemed mutely to compare him with these discarded notes. He almost felt as if he were in a police bureau with a great detective taking impressions of his thumb print. And yet he wasn't conscious of having done anything wrong—to the extent of being found out.

"I wonder if you will do?" she said at last.

"I shall be delighted to do—anything; if you will afford me the opportunity of service."

"Wait! Don't be too generous—of your generosity. This is a spider's web, and you the fly. But here comes my Aunt Ann Grimes with fruit and milk and cream; it is beautiful cream. Eat and drink and then you will be fit for business."

He needed very little invitation to fall on the rosy fruit, on the slab of thick cream. Strawberries were her scarlet lip and cream her wonderful complexion. Yet when he looked at her cheek he thought of vellum—a scholar's books; or he thought of old ivory—there was a note of gold in it somewhere.

She sat leaning back, watching him. When he pushed the plate and tumbler aside at last a new fire ran into her manner, a nervous, molten stream.

"You would like to come to business at once?" she asked, fluttering the account-book, and making of it a fan. She seemed to know by instinct all the tricks of a fan, this fairy, this witch. No Spanish woman could have done more—with consciousness—than she, quite unknowing, did with this little red book, all lines and odd scribbles. He had never met such a woman in his life; his life had certainly been fairly short—he was twenty-seven—but women had been many. Since he came of age he had traveled continually, and talked hard whenever he got the chance.

"I would like to do anything you wish."

She laughed.

"If that were so, business would be at end."

She looked down; he marked the shadow of a blush, he saw her throat flutter. It was a beautiful throat, not too slim, perfectly classic.

"You are a perfect stranger," she began, after a moment.

"Fortunately; therefore, you may give me perfect confidence. With old friends we are afraid of candor, with relations it is impossible."

"You really think so? Yes, of course you are right. I have relations—and remain to them a closed book. They live in London or near; at Finchley."

"Finchley is more removed from London than Land's End; all the suburbs are," he told her.

"Do you come from London? Certainly, you are not in the least like my Aunt and Uncle Luxmore."

"I come from everywhere, all the big cities; yet in London I was born. A wonderful place!"

"I suppose so—yet hardly so wonderful as those." She flung back her head and looked at the hills.

"Of twin value—but with a difference," he insisted, adding, "we are not yet talking business."

"Thank you. We must certainly come to business." She patted the account-book flat upon the round table. "The fact is, I am very poor—left penniless, almost. And I love this place; it would break my heart to leave it. I have never lived anywhere else. Aunt Ann Grimes and I"—she was now talking very fast and flushing—"cannot possibly afford to live here alone, and so I was proposing to advertise for paying guests."

"Exactly—and those are your essays up to the moment of speaking." He twinkled at the pencil notes.

She smiled.

"You see it is a difficult advertisement to draw up. I want people of character—and means."

"A rare combination," said Peter

Bonsey. "For myself, I have character—to overflow."

"And means?"

"Not worth mentioning."

Christine's face was falling.

"Perhaps you have rich friends?" she said. "That is why I have spoken to you. Isn't there anyone you could recommend, when you go back to London? The advertisement is so difficult." She pushed the account-book away and sighed.

"Advertisements are quite easy, if only you are impudent enough. That rule applies to all the business of life. You must in some way lift yourself head and shoulders from the usual herd. I believe that it is quite easy for the Young Widow in acute distress and with unexceptionable references to get the loan of fifty pounds she pleads for. If she asked for a plain fiver, there would be no answer to her advertisement. Swindling is the most lucrative profession in the world."

"I was not proposing to swindle," she said coldly.

"I beg your pardon, Miss—Miss—"

"My name is Christine Verney."

"And mine is Peter Bonsey. You— you may have heard it?"

"No—never; but then, I have heard of no one. This is not a spot for reputations."

"Happy spot! One may conceal what one has and what one has not. May I see the rooms you offer, Miss Verney? I—I may hear of someone—who would be charmed."

He halted a little in this last speech—and verbal halting was most unusual with him. The fact was, he was dazzled, confused and delighted by a sudden idea. Why should he not stay here and be a paying guest himself? What beautiful work a man might produce in this place—with such surroundings, with such godlike food. He looked down at the cream-plate—there was certainly inspiration in it. He knew that his work, so far, had a quality which had killed it—for permanence; in this pure place he might shed himself of that quality. He might become, what the world of critics in-

sisted that he ought to be, a true poet. For the present he was merely a feverish and highly gifted promise. The critics were afraid, so to speak, to put their money on him. They never knew what he was going to do next—and of all created creatures there is nothing more timid than the critic.

With such a hostess would not a man's muse turn to flame, to white fire? Her eyes, the poetry of her slightest movement! And then her name—Christine! He loved it. It was eloquent of religion—of an old, pure and permanent faith. Like all poets, he was religious by instinct, and the fact that he was an unbeliever sometimes made him sad. The hope that he might some day believe consoled him in his darkest moments. Like most poets, he turned in desperate moods to the idea of a monastery as a final refuge. He thought he would make an excellent monk—if only they would let him start as an abbot. He could never possibly subserve himself to a person with an inferior beauty sense.

He had no faith, and sometimes privately deplored the omission. Yet it remained a vague regret; was never a living anguish, as it certainly would have been had he known religion and then lost it. Remorse is the pain and the privilege of the renegade. But religion for him, in early youth, had been merely synonymous with rebellion. He was of Calvinist parentage and his idea of God was somehow bound up indissolubly with a whitewashed, bare chapel on Sunday mornings in Summer-time—with blue-bottles buzzing on a dusty pane, with the nod of best bonnets and the foolish wag of sleekly brushed heads. He had been born a Calvinist—and it is extraordinary how many artists and poets this grim sect gives to the world! It is a Nemesis on Calvin.

Christine! It was a name to conjure with. It brought to him memories of Galilee and of inspired fishermen. He linked it, as a woman's name, with the even more blessed one of Mary.

Christine! She had arisen. She

was standing, slim and clean, like a fir sapling, in her pink cotton frock—a simple frock. Even his male eye marked all over it the trail of the village dressmaker. Yet nothing could possibly spoil, conceal or pervert the gloriously statuesque lines of—his hostess. His hostess! Yes, she should certainly be that, if it cost him his last penny, if, in the end, he had to borrow from Ralph. Ralph was his sworn friend and constant admirer; to these qualities he added the still more comfortable one of an income of two thousand a year. It would be quite easy to borrow from Ralph Pryor, if the worst came to the worst. And like all artists, he brimmed over with optimism—he was quite sure that some day, sooner or later, most likely sooner, he would write something that would not only move the world, but open its pockets, the brute. Some day—soon—he would be rich; far richer than Ralph, with his beggarly two thousand a year.

"Perhaps you may as well see the rooms, before you go on your way," said Christine coldly. "There will be no harm in that."

She was certainly cold. He had frightened her by that word swindle. What a fool he had been!

"As to going on my way, it is an arid prospect now," he said. "I am merely on a walking tour, killing time—to keep my body in order. I was a bit run down and the doctors recommended exercise. But the savor is out of things—no other spot will be so lovely as this, no other house so original and charming."

He had followed her indoors. They went through a square room, which seemed half kitchen, half family dwelling-place. It had the unspeakable charm of these jovial old places, these great hospitable chambers bent to every domestic use. He loved the gray of it—floor and walls. All day, as he walked for days before, always walking, he had been cherishing gray buildings. One became so tired of the neat, red villages round London. In this place, far removed, there were

coolness, pallor, massive lines and a sense of peace.

This house did not propose to change its scheme until the Judgment Day. Judgment would lift everything up by the roots. He cherished the solid furniture—brown oak, with here and there a wink of mellow metal—of handle or hinge. He loved a large china dog on the high shelf; a white dog, with a copper-colored chain meandering all over it. The dog looked like a canine Lord Mayor, but Peter Bonsey wished, nevertheless, it had been a cat. He could not forget the cat on the wall and the wonderful accentuated savagery of her unwinking green eyes. There had been murder in the bristly sprout of her white whiskers. Yes, he would certainly start a religion—of the Cat. It was a weird idea and would take with the public. The public was such a fool; it would swallow anything—if only you spread your wares in Bond street. He, with all poets, desired to laugh at fools.

He loved the great hearth, ten feet wide—and yawning like a giant's throat. The pungent smell of oak half-burned away on the bricks was joy at his nostril. What a place—of the senses—this was! He could work here—and be happy and healthy—and quite harmless. He sighed.

What barbaric secrets lay half-revealed in the things he saw?—rude domestic pots and shovels and hooks and hangers, ladles and skimmers of copper and of brass, all polished to the utmost; a battery all ablaze, a peacock's tail of burnish, an Argus of the hearth.

"This is the room I offer, as a private parlor," said Christine, opening a second door. He saw then, for the first time, that two rooms opened out of the big chamber—one at each end.

"All the furniture is as good as new," she said. "We hardly ever used the room. It was furnished for my mother who, so I gather, had a taste for this style. It appeals to Aunt Ann Grimes also."

He read the quiet scorn in her voice—despite her. In truth, this second chamber was an appalling room, it was the terrible "best parlor" of the lower middle class. It was the sort of room which, so he hoped and believed, was peculiar to England. Wide seas shut it off from all the other countries. He was an Englishman, but plaintively ashamed of the fact—and you couldn't pay him a greater compliment than by feigning utter disbelief in his nationality. To him, the English stood for everything that was ugly, sensible and unpoetic. Wasn't this very room in which he stood eloquent of the national hideousness? And the country was scarred all over with rooms more or less like it.

He and this beautiful, this incomparable Christine were standing on a grass-green carpet, bunched with roses of a shade and a shape which never grew in God's good earth. They were staring at a round table of burr walnut—you could tell that by its curly legs and its shocking pedestal; the top of it was covered with a red and black cloth, on which at intervals were set books in bright bindings. In the very middle of the table was a bunch of woolwork flowers under a glass shade.

There were bandy-legged chairs, also of burr walnut and covered with green rep. There was an easy-chair with spinal curvature. There was a side-board with beveled-glass panels in which you could see your boots. Peter was fiendishly glad that his were so dusty, so country rough and thick. They would make the hair, so to speak, of this frightful prude of a room stand on end. He could not make up his mind at first whether the room was a prude or a hussy. It was a prude! He looked at the French-gray walls, at the curtains—stiff net, blue white. To stand in this room was like talking to an old maid, a woman of forty-five who had never been kissed. What use had the world for rooms and for women of this type? His poet's soul rebelled; he felt positively sick. He looked through the open door

at the wide refinement of the great living place.

"I don't like this room," he said bluntly. "I hate it; I should like to murder it. Forgive me."

Christine laughed; she wasn't cold any longer; her dignity melted like snow under sun.

"I'm so glad. I was half afraid you would be charmed. Isn't it dreadful—terrific? Yet Aunt Ann Grimes comes in and dusts it every morning. She sits here on Sundays with a book of sermons open on her lap, and her spectacles hoisted up into her front hair, and her eyes fixed on the sea—until she falls asleep. Then I come in, shutting my eyes, too, so that I shall not see the carpet, and put the book of sermons back on the table again. You see, if it fell on the floor, it would break its back—and the heart of Aunt Ann Grimes. She would think she had missed salvation, somehow."

As Christine spoke she went out of the room. Peter Bonsey followed her. They closed the door on this chamber of horrors. It occurred to him, as a whimsical last idea, that if you dotted that room about with waxwork figures the effect would be so utterly frightful that it would kill the first unwary visitor at sight.

"There is another room, better—different altogether. Come and look at it," said Christine. "There are books. Do you like books?"

"Like is a bald word," he said hotly. "I love them!"

"Do you? Oh, then, come and see," she returned joyfully, new color and meaning tingeing the pure oval of her creamy cheek.

She seemed to skim, to swim, to glide across the square, dim flags—this swan, this serpent, this most adorable of women. To watch her walk was far better than to see other women—the most skilled—dance. Christine! What a name and what a creature! He must most certainly have dropped from the clouds—or been drawn up into them. Even the parlor had not been the one touch of sanity required

to make him sure that he was still on earth. It was repulsive, yet of the backward, outgoing tide. Nowadays, the British workman and his even more aggressive brother, the British small tradesman, had interpolated a quality they called Art into their Sunday parlors. This quality was very awful; it was even worse than burr walnut and a chair with a spinal curvature. There had been no Art in the parlor; there had been a rank, chuckling, solid ugliness.

"You will like this," said Christine, opening the second door.

Like it! His heart waked to this third room. He was a friend with it instantly—he was closer than a brother.

There was a wide window, uncurtained and betraying vaguely the shy, blue bosom of the eternal seas. There, in the distance, lay the sea, with hills all around. They seemed to stand close, in the hot June sun, the hills. They came right up to the water, had their big toes in it. And he saw banks of sand, lint, white, and a strip of shingle and little juts of black rock—that seemed to snarl up—half merrily, half threateningly—like the nose of a lady's pet pug. And between him and this heavenly, bewildering beauty there was sloping land, with sheep—to munch and to tinkle their bells—with cows, red-flanked and cream-patched.

He looked gloatingly round this perfect room. He loved it because it was so untidy, because it brimmed with books, had no dusty draperies, betrayed no sinister touch of a woman's hand, and conserved the faint smell of tobacco. It was a very faint and most sweet smell. It had been smoked so long ago that it had lost its early distinctive quality. It was not so much pronounced tobacco as elusive perfume. It struck just the right note that perfume should; it was only suggested. It was as lavender to well-cared-for sheets, as the scent of a woman's skin, or the backs of old, exquisitely bound books, or the faint pot-pourri in an old parlor. Yet it was certainly tobacco—gone, dead. Peter's grateful nerves responded to it. He

knew himself to be in the home of a scholar—perhaps the scholar was dead. He looked for a note of black in Christine, but found only rose-pink. Her cotton frock was of so deep a rose that your ardent eyes dropped right into it.

"It was my father's; he was a great student. All day and every day he sat at this table"—she pointed to one littered with papers—"and one day Aunt Ann Grimes found him sitting dead at it. That is all. It is a very little while ago, but one doesn't wear doleful black."

She turned to the window and he knew that she was making a brave attempt not to cry before him, a perfect stranger; the poor little soul! He did not feel that he was a stranger at all; he felt that they had been friends all their lives—but was very glad they hadn't been. For example, what a calamity if they had been born cousins: you might marry a cousin—but she remained more cousin than wife.

"If I might be permitted to stay and be a paying guest," he said humbly, yet with barely concealed eagerness, "and do my work, I ask nothing more of life."

She turned round and looked at him. Her eyes were blacker than the jutting snarls of rock. Yet five minutes before they had been blurred, sad gray—as the flags on the floor of the big room. She was a woman of moods, of chameleon quality, both in her beauty and her brain. He knew quite well that these are the women who charm, who hold men in the hollow of their little hands and laugh at them—or close on them.

"You work?"

"I write—sometimes; but here, always."

"How my father would have loved you!"

Peter Bonsey smiled; then his eye lighted and his hand became a thief. He picked up from the floor, where it lay face down, a slim green book—a genteel, grass-green, smirking thing; closed, it had the primness of a carefully rolled parasol.

There were books everywhere, on

open shelves. He hated the tyranny of the glazed door, and the dead scholar had evidently been like him in this particular; books on the window-ledge and chairs and stacked upon the floor. But the little green book—the one book in the world to him, such was his egregious and most engaging egotism—had been face downward on the floor, until he picked it up. He caught it to him and cuddled it—his book. It was his wonderful egotism which made his promise as a poet. Humility may be and is a Christian virtue, much to be desired; but the poet and the warrior are strange with it.

"You know that book?" Christine was staring at him; wondering at the new, greedy light in his eyes, marking the twitch of his shoulder—it shot to his ear and down again.

"I wrote it. See!"

He pointed to the name on the title-page. Her face grew crimson; he was reminded of the reddest rose that a garden grows. He had not thought an ivory-hued brunette conserved such stores of living color.

"I remember," she said faintly, and evidently in a mysterious agony of much embarrassment.

"You have read it?" As he asked her this he looked joyful, eager, yet shamed and afraid.

The faces of them both were a study in complexity—and all over a slim green book. Slim and green—inconsiderable, in a world which is all books. Yet it contained his spirit—and his sins.

"No, no," she said emphatically; adding, with a down-dropped look, "my father would not let me and—may I say, without wounding you, just exactly what happened?"

"Of course you may—I don't think, although we are such perfect strangers and therefore so deeply confidential, that you could possibly wound me, unless you sent me away. As to this"—he clasped the green, sweet sinner close—"you could never be so severe, or so indulgent, as critics have been. They blessed and cursed in one breath."

"I only want to tell you just what he

felt," said Christine, using the personal pronoun with a sense of sanctity—her dead, so lately dead.

"Yes, yes—go on."

"He read it with the most intense delight; he predicted a poet—new, marvelous. This, at the first few pages. As he went on he became silent, then angry, then condemnatory. Finally—this was two days before he died—he flung the book in a corner, as you found it. It has stayed there ever since. I was—forgive me—afraid to touch it, because—because—"

"Go on," said Peter politely, yet with the ill-concealed irritation of the poet.

"Because of something he said."

"And that?"

She looked at him clearly; her eyes were gray and very pitiful.

"In moments, the devil seizes the soul of this gifted man. I imperil my own by reading him.' That is all. Forgive me. You see, my father was devout."

Peter had turned to the uncurtained window. His face was very white, his shoulder jumped and jerked and twisted; there was a queer corner to his mouth. The whole man appeared to have subtly twisted. He stared out mournfully at all the eternities—sea, sun and mountains, land all delicately green; the things that were going to last, long after he had gone to his account, while he lay somewhere waiting—for judgment on him and his green book. There was such purity, such sanity and goodness in all these immutable things. He could be good here, and industrious—and harmless. Good God! How pure he could—and would—be!

"If you will let me stay," he said brokenly, "and work within these four walls, I will do something so much better than this; and yet"—his eye lighted and he held the green book nearer—"I love it so. May I keep it?"

"Certainly, it is yours," said Christine simply.

She was looking at him strangely; her heart beneath the burning rose-

pink of her bodice plagued her to death. The curious thing kept up a perfect patter of questions. This man, this stranger, this incorrigible person who had dropped down on her suddenly and become an instant inmate of her emotions, was so complex, so—so different. She had never known a young man before. Her knowledge of the childlike, yet baffling male sex was confined to her father and to the parson. Peter Bonsey had dropped from nowhere into her peaceful life, and in a confusing swirl and twist of things had instantly changed it. She could never be quite the same again. She likened herself to a pool—and he was a stone dropped in by inexorable, by most mischievous Fate. He was destined to make perpetual eddies.

"Would you really like to stay?" she said. "My father would have loved you—he would have understood. He was wonderful; here is his portrait. You don't know anything about him yet. We have been talking—"

"Business!" said Peter lightly; he had quite recovered himself. A nature of his kind lifts to heaven and sinks to hell in the tick of a watch.

He took the miniature from her as she lifted it from the open drawer of the library-table. He saw a very ordinary-looking elderly man, stout, flabby; yet with the wistful eyes of a dreamer, with the pathetic appeal of constant failure. There was not a touch of Christine's classic beauty. The dead man was *bourgeois*—and yet with a baffling dash of poet. These, as Peter knew, are the elements that make for tragedy in a life. To be all *bourgeois* or all vagabond poet—these parts are easy enough to play. But it is when desires conflict that suffering begins. Christine's very next words gave him the key to the dead man's character.

"He married beneath him—a village beauty. This is my mother."

He took the second miniature—and looked long into the lovely, simpering face; the face of a perfect fool and yet, with something elusively, eternally Greek about it. One could so well understand a man, with the poetic

strain, losing his head. How was it that these classic types cropped here and there, perhaps thrice in a century, among bean-and-bacon-eating rustics? He gave both the miniatures back, and Christine reverently covered them over and shut the drawer.

"Aunt Ann Grimes was her sister," she said. "You would never suppose it. And, dearly though I love her, she remains more Ann to me than aunt. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. We have the charming gift of understanding—you and I."

"I begin to admit that we have," said Christine gladly. "Well, to continue family history, my poor mother died when I was born. And my father became more of a student than ever, and Aunt Ann Grimes mothered and spoiled me. Life went on smoothly enough, until my father died—a little pension he had died with him. So I am alone, you see, quite alone. We have no friends, to speak of; the country is sparsely populated. Moreover, my father's mad marriage ruined him as a social factor; set taboo on me before I was born. And now you know all that there is to know."

"I feel that I have followed you every day of your life from your cradle up till now," he said fervently. "And—to be businesslike—you are going to let me stay?"

She put out her hand—the long, golden-tinged hand that had no part with her exquisite peasant mother. That hand of hers was the very essence of all that there had been of poet in her father. She took his.

"It is a compact," she said gravely. "We—we have sworn the very oddest troth of absolute confidence in something under an hour. I—I never knew anything like it. And—and," she laughed, "you must go and settle things—money and a bedroom and the time you wish for meals—with Aunt Ann Grimes."

He laughed, too; the thought of Aunt Grimes hit him full between the eyes. Aunt Ann Grimes! Such a practical rustic, such a serviceable skirt!

"I will pay court to Mrs. Grimes with pleasure," he said docilely.

"She is Miss Grimes," said Christine quaintly. "And you must not talk to her in paradox, or picture, or in any way that is fanciful, for she will consider you a lost soul. She is very religious; she is afraid of fancy. Keep to pounds, shillings and pence; ask her to see that your bed is well aired and that your dinner is served to the minute, and she will trust you. You will be safe, you will be on the highroad to her good graces. And now I shall take you back to the parlor again: I do not love the idea of Aunt Ann Grimes in this room. And you will both talk business—while I go out in the veranda and tear up the account-book."

Peter waited in the parlor, while Aunt Ann Grimes, incontinently dragged by Christine from the glad picking of a fowl, washed her hands and smoothed her hair and fastened the neck of her bodice with a large pebble brooch. These concessions to toilette she judged to be sufficient toward a stranger who had arrived in the spirit of a suppliant and without luggage. Luggage to Aunt Ann Grimes was a passport to the good opinion of this world, as chapel-going was a certain first-class ticket to the world to come. She had very few opinions on any matter, but those she had were definite enough. She was a delightful type of the born bigot—she allowed no one to teach her how to save her soul or how to kill, clean and truss a chicken.

Peter was looking utterly wretched, unearthly meek, oppressed to utter death, by rep and by a rose-twined carpet, when she opened the door and came up close and dropped him a rather defiant sort of curtsy.

"My niece tells me you be mindful ter stay wi' us fer a spell, sir," she said, opening the matter without superfluous parley and stunning him by the employment of that word "niece." It really did not seem possible.

"I'm mindful, Miss Grimes, to stay for the rest of my days."

"You'd best call me Ann Grimes an' ha' done wi' it," she said tersely. "An' as ter stayin' all your days, thet's as may be. I mistrusts the vows o' youth, an' you can't be a day more'n eight-an'-twenty."

"That is a very fair shot, Ann Grimes," he returned easily—and staring into her impassive face and wondering if, say, forty years back, she had found reason to mistrust the vows of youth.

Forty years back! Where was he, Peter Bonsey, then—and where the limpid stream of poesy which ran in him? These were the questions he constantly flung up to God. Forty years back! Forty years hence!

"The on'y question is," said Ann Grimes, sobering him, "ef you be willin' an' able—which is more ter the p'int—terpay me, ivery Monday mornin' reglar, three pun ten a week fer lodgin' an' vittles. Your washin' ter be extry, an' your drinks; not as I holds wi' unholy beer swillin's."

"I never drink beer—if I can get nectar," he said humbly—and the frightful room was whirling round him like mad, and grinning and nodding.

Three pounds ten a week—for breathing the same air with a goddess! Three pounds ten a week—for feeding on cream, which was poet's food! He remembered that bees fed their queens on special food. In the same fashion Aunt Ann Grimes would feed him up into a pure poet.

Three pounds ten! Incredibly modest sum! He could have laughed and danced and sung—and sworn! He could have shocked those two prudes, the parlor and Ann Grimes, to death. What a positive mercy it was that all the world—of poets—did not know this place. For a weekly sum that amounted barely to a mechanic's wage you achieved perfection—yet the mechanic preserved a widely differing ideal. A mechanic's wage! There was the rub—and the most glorious safeguard. True poets never made three pounds ten a week. Fortunately he, Peter Bonsey, had a little fortune of two hundred and fifty a year.

Hitherto he had considered this to be starvation pittance; he now found that it was sufficient, more than sufficient, for a man's most spiritual needs.

"Three pounds ten a week!" he said, smiling. "I am eminently willing and quite able. When shall we begin? Today is Thursday."

"Theer be your luggage," said Ann doubtfully.

"I have two shirts in my knapsack and several more at my hotel," he said easily. "I walked over this morning from your market town, where I have been staying."

This simplified matters to Aunt Ann Grimes. Her brow lifted. She had feared he might say his luggage was in London. Now all respectable persons knew that London was a mere jostle of thieves, of people who cut your throat or your pocket.

"Ef sur be you was stayin' at the Swan," she said, naming the best hotel the little town afforded, "Juke can fetch your box when he goes in to-morrer."

"Juke! A strange name! Is he the local fairy?"

"He be the carrier, sir, an' his true name be Wattles. But we do call 'un Juke acause he be like one."

"An excellent rule—yet dangerous. May I pay my three pounds ten now and consider myself one of the family?"

He brought the gold out of his pocket. Ann's eyes gleamed, not so much from covetousness as from suppressed tears. She loved Christine and yearned for her, although the girl was a stranger, a queen, a fond alien. There is a gulf, wide as that set between Lazarus and Dives, stretching between the gently born and the simple, and Christine had taken nothing of her mother but wonderful beauty. Three pounds ten! Ann saw in these winking coins the promise of eternal ease for her darling.

"Theer's on'y one thing," she said timidly. "I can't suffer you ter bide in this yere best room, save on Sunday mornin's when I be at chapel."

"I wouldn't dream of it," he said hastily. "I—I'm not worthy of it."

Ann Grimes looked at him kindly. "Thet's a true word," she said. "An' I'm glad you've got the sense ter speak it. Men ain't fit ter come nigh purty things. They wun't niver spread a pocket-handkercher on the sofy-cushions afore they lays theer heads back, an' they kicks up the corners o' the carpets an' sets the fender an' the chairs all skew-wiffitey an' knocks down the fire-irons, until yer think fer all the world as a young calf had bin let loose in it, instead o' one of God A'mighty's humans."

"I'll go out into the veranda now, if I may," said Peter meekly, speaking with the air of a little boy who has been told to wipe his boots. This was a terrible and most amusing woman.

"Bide a bit. You ain't sin your bedroom." She went bustling out to the foot of the stairs. "Be you partial to the east light in the mornin's?"

"No, I love darkness, Ann Grimes."

"Then you'll favor the west room," she said, ascending and looking at him with faint suspicion—there was a Bible twang about this stranger's speech. She did not just know whether to approve or condemn.

She took him along twisting passages and down short flights of steps. Everything was charming and unexpected; it was a most coquettish old house. He was so sick of sane houses, all beautifully appointed and leaving nothing to the imagination. In this place one was delighted by a sudden lattice or brought up violently by a treacherous step. There was violence here and novelty and joy.

They reached the extreme end of a wing that had been added, say, eighty years back. The farmhouse was a place of patches. It amazed you in the way of a country quilt. There were only three rooms here.

"You'll be ter yourself, as it wur," said Ann Grimes, looking proudly round at the white floor and the white bed and the gently fluttering curtains. "Me an' Christine, an' a gell, Arethusa Miller by name, as I shall hev in ter help wi' scourin', lays at tother end. This bit o' the house be stuck on any-

how; I dunno whyfore. The folks as done it be long dead."

Peter was looking round the room approvingly. How quiet a man could be here, and how clever!

"I like the rooms very much," he said quite quietly—one could not let oneself go with Ann Grimes, but he had never been so beautifully happy in his life before.

"Ef theer be any little thing you wants, as you don't find handy, you won't be above mentionin' it," said Ann, with warmth.

And with this they went downstairs again and the interview was ended—save that she flung him the parting suave promise of a chicken and spinach for his dinner.

He went out in the veranda. The vine climbed all over it, with tendrils, which were a constant reminder of a woman's ringlet. Tendrils and half-formed fruit; shy, green-pointed leaves that were hearts—or a tongue. A wonderful plant, the vine! The shadow of it lay on the flags, danced across Christine's dark head of sleek hair in heavy masses. There was nothing of frivolous red or gold in this crown she wore, no tempestuous, stealing curl. It was all in rich, classic masses, above a skin of cream, above eyes that were a sweet, perpetual riddle.

She was sitting before the table, her hands spread loosely on it, the account-book torn into small, precise pieces and piled into a tiny mountain. She had torn up the whole book for one spoiled page—an act of glorious abandon. He loved her for that; it struck the very note of his own nature. She was looking vaguely out, through aisles of fluttering green at the far-off sea.

The pattern on the vine danced above her head; it made her more Greek than ever.

The vine! What wonder was twined in it, what sweet joy, what superb sin! The poignant history of cups innumerable! He thought of poisoned chalices and of love-draughts. The vine! To stare up, to look at it, to see it gravely dancing between this girl's bewitching

eyes, struck his strings of poesy. How he could work in this place! How wild he could be, how original—marvellous, wonderful, everything, and—pure!

The vine! Not red, as it would be; nothing scarlet, or purple, or deep, dangerous crimson—yet. The baby fruit was small and apple-green, most innocent; the leaves were a cold bloomy gray. And then the fanciful twist of its green hair—you could not call them tendrils! And the stately measure it danced above and over this perfect girl!

The vine! It struck Guilt and Innocence—in one root. He could be so simple in this place—he sighed. He could be prolific—of poetry; he would flow one sweet stream of literature—limpid as a brook. Virgins should delight in him—and wise men. So should his gift grow—in strength, in much simplicity. Again he sighed, and this time the sigh was a groan. He had forgotten the girl, forgotten Aunt Ann Grimes. The spirit of banter died in him, lay on his eyes, heavy and cold, as a dead thing. He knew his own elusive tragedy, the poison drop in his muse.

He looked up to find Christine's grave eyes full on him. She was looking with much interest—and a half-flick of positive terror, the mood that Nature sometimes evokes. She had certainly been correct in calling him rugged. You might call him—a mountain, the sea in a storm; one of those elements she had vowed she would mate with, if at all.

He was long and fair, sallow and spare—distinctly plain. His thick, up-standing hair was of that faint deceitful color which in some lights declares itself gray, yet is merely tow-colored. In his eyes there dwelt whole tomes of most mysterious history.

He was the first man she had ever seen—to look at, to consider. One passed men in the market town, saw them in the village, sat with them at church—but never regarded them, never pressed them into one's scheme of life. This young man—the very first

for close scrutiny, would not be thus lightly dismissed. Moreover, he was probably going to dwell under the same roof with her.

Their glances met, drifted, dwelt together; then she patted the bench on which she sat, with the little dignified, coquettish gesture which Peter already found to be irresistible. He sat down.

"You have settled with Aunt Ann Grimes?"

"I have settled; I am more than grateful," he said fervently—mournfully, so it seemed.

He sat looking at her, an odd gloating in his eyes, an ardor which was almost ugly. Around them the Summer world went whirling and spinning, pirouetting, lifting its skirts—the madcap. The air was noisy, yet drowsy, with all the beautiful, carefully rehearsed music of June.

Vine and sun together made a queer light, a suggestion of positive substance on this man's shoulder, which more than once he seemed to twitch—as if to shake off some faint, elusive being of sun and leaf compacted. Christine was watching—she could not take her eyes away; and as she watched all the life-known world of home seemed to wax mysterious, to become suffused with rosy, dangerous subtleties. Yet it was nothing, save vine-leaves and a splint of golden sun sitting on a man's uneasy shoulder.

She laughed at last.

"The vine, dancing on your coat, running along the top of your sleeve makes a shoulder-knot. A shoulder-knot! An imp, a fairy—so it seemed for a moment. Then I blinked my eyes and it was gone."

"Fairies go in a blink—and ghosts; but not devils," he said lazily, stretching his dusty feet and drinking in the long draught of salt blue air.

Christine bent toward him, her long hands clasped, her mouth a little parted. What a perfect upper lip she had, this classic, this charmer! And he was a glutton of beauty in any form.

"It is there again; a knot, a fay—how funny!"

"We will call it a knot, my shoulder-knot," he said indulgently, too sleepily content to rise to fancy. "In old days, when men wore them, a lady, if she liked a man, tied it for him. Would you for me?"

"Very likely," she said lightly. "I think I am going to like you very much—because you are a student, as my father was."

"I am a poet—who is the sworn enemy of the student. Yet—like me, please, notwithstanding. And—tie my shoulder-knot."

They gave each other a quick, odd glance, then looked away; he at the glinting roof, she at the dancing leaves beneath his ear. They did not say one other word; something told them that they stood on the threshold of all things. Life—for both—awoke; would never sleep again.

II

PETER BONSEY had been writing all the morning, with that buoyant young uplifted gladness which comes of work that is easy and ardent; when a man gives the best of himself without effort. Then, suddenly he became troubled, grew pallid and trembled. It came on him without warning—a terrible, well-known mood. He thought he had escaped it, evaded it; gleefully believed that he had given it the slip, played permanent truant with it.

Escape! You may run away from your creditors, but never from your besetting sin. You cannot even go bankrupt and begin all over again—paying to the Evil One so much in the pound and so getting quit of him.

He was full of terror and of glee, with rage and triumph in turn. He knew the old signs well enough; they came in correct, in hateful, in enthralling rotation. He went on writing; wrote slack, wrote furious—tore up with scorn or read with gloating all that he did.

Finally he arose and went to the window, holding his brow against the cold pane, looking out beseechingly. All the pastoral scene was suddenly

crimsoned, out of shape, new and frightful. Never had there been such an appalling and fascinating monster as the black cat with the white whiskers who came suddenly out of the murk of the great barn and stood winking in full sunlight. He saw living creatures and a landscape of most unholy persuasion; the very birds on the branches had changed. He wanted to write down with ecstasy all that he saw—color, shape, malformed, living creatures and perverted movement.

After all, this was a gift of rare vision, and why not perpetuate it? No other eyes had ever seen such strange things, nor had any brain flashed such thoughts. He would give, vision and thought to the world. He would put it all into phrases of molten fire. He would turn every tame convention upside down—make it stand on its head. God had granted him vision. God? He shuddered.

He turned from the window, looked inland, as it were, viewed the cold and virtuous security of a scholarly interior. But every book was bound in liquid crimson, and strange shapes bowed and whirled and nodded upon the white-washed wall. He was afraid of the room—scorned and revered it. This room had been the study of a man who had kept himself sacred to all the virtues and serenities—that meant merely a stupid man, an everyday fool of a man. Peter grinned and shrugged. He felt all the things that sinners feel when they are confronted with saints. The swift new mood that had come to him distorted everything, perverted clear judgment. Eccentric fancies jostled and nudged one another in his head. A new mood? Not a bit of it. He marked it well enough, had suffered with it, joyed in it—for years; had held it in his bosom or trampled it underfoot.

He would go out, he would drink air; air and the sane lullaby of the long, incoming tide. He would see Christine—if he could find her. But he did not know if he would ever find her. She might have changed, too—with the landscape.

He went out, but first he carefully tore up every line that he had written that morning. It would break his heart if Christine or even if Aunt Ann Grimes read one line of it.

Aunt Ann Grimes! He always laughed, despite himself, whenever he thought of her. Today he revered her, lifted her into a niche. She was simple, she was sane, she was a free woman—of the senses. For himself, he was like a cork upon a wave.

He went out, hating the vine that lay upon the roof. It was prolific now, weighted, a stay-at-home. The fruit of it was turning red, the leaves curled at the corners with long drought; the flying tendrils were the pale lips of women. All the innocence of June was gone; this was Autumn with yellow, wine-laden breath.

It was Sunday, and midday, and as he went along the road and passed the little cottages, the smell of Sunday dinners stumped stolidly out and stood in the full sun. It was a very hot and lazy day; all the world was resting—and clearing its throat with fervent psalms. Every door was open, and out came the smell of bacon and beans and vegetables, or of a weekly roast. He could, through his nose, as it were, peep into all the ovens and see flaky pastry rising or see the fat fall with a sizzle into the dripping-pan. He knew about these things, for he had watched Aunt Ann Grimes cook many a time. These homely smells and memories steadied him. He nodded greeting to a rustic who leaned with a pipe over a gate; a pagan rustic who had not decked himself in broadcloth and gone to church. He remained golden—of clothing and week-day toil; he was merely an accentuation of the fields that waved to harvest. Peter could see the harvest fields; they climbed up the flanks of the hills; they were furrowed, as it were, by blood-red rifts of poppies.

The smell of fusty garments was merely the smell of stale sun; he cherished the man as he passed him. It was homely, traditional, true; an appropriate mixture of odors which waved aside the centuries. He found

himself thinking in pleasing, water-clear terms. For a moment he was eased and happy—then contemptuous. Any poet could be pretty, sentimental, sane—to him there had been given a more mystic gift.

He went toward the village, walking jerkily downhill. People were coming home from church and chapel. First he saw a wagonette; it moved like a hearse. The horse was black; so was the driver, so were the people inside.

"They look as if they were crawling to be hanged," he said to himself with bitter contempt—and then remembered that, when people went publicly to be hanged, long years ago, they had gone with pageant, with the flash of a crowd and the scent of a nosegay.

"They think they are going to heaven—through a tunnel," he said, shifting the simile.

He nodded to Aunt Ann Grimes, who barely deigned to see him. Three pounds ten a week was small amends in her eyes for a godless life. She sat with the grocer and his family, with the retired wheelwright and the late butcher's elderly widow—these made up the main of the chapel congregation. They were just of that mid-rank to arrogantly decide for themselves on the large matter of a future life. They had created for themselves a very definite hell and a hazy promise of heaven.

Ann Grimes had her eyes screwed up, partly from the glare of the sun, but more with sour piety.

"I hope he ain't goin' ter meet Christine comin' out o' church," she said, craning her neck to mark the road he took. "She be gentle born an' brung up Church o' England accordin'. 'Tain't much as she do git in the way o' religion, an' thet little he'll skim off."

But he was going to meet Christine—going jauntily, hopefully, desperately down the hill and deep into the sane little village of Sunday frocks and feet and chiming. He felt that in Christine he would find salvation and relief—from this sad thing, this familiar, gibing demon that had overtaken him, found him out, mastered him. It had him

fast by the sleeve, its face was very close, its wide mouth stretched at his. It was laughing at him and with him—and all the landscape had changed. Never had a man seen such things; it was all marvelous, intoxicating. It was most devilish and heartrending.

He stopped at the turn of the road to watch the wagonette climb the hill. It went like a big stag beetle. The dresses of the women were so funereal that he caught never the flutter of scarf or string; they made a compact, sad mass. He laughed—at the mere thought of rustic Ann Grimes being the aunt of Christine—his queen, his classic jewel. Christine! She was perfection, and Ann Grimes was her aunt. He had never got used to this, never left off marveling. It was a strangely assorted world and blood ties were thin, after all—they were merely made by the perverse matings of men. Christine's father had been caught by an exquisite face—and in a deft twist of a generation one found this extraordinary hotchpotch. He did not resent it; he was piqued, amused, amazed. It was like setting a bit of coal and an opal in one pendant.

A bird's white breast, as it flew and turned in the deep sky, flashed like an opal. He stopped to look at that; bathed in the beauty of it—until his familiar devil shook him fiercely and turned the sweet, flying creature into new shape; made it a thing of strangeness, of horrible fascination. He no longer saw opals—or a bird's breast. He could see nothing with daylight eyes—and never would, until he met Christine. She would save him.

He went down the white road, brooding on the things that save men from themselves and from the watchful, gifted Devil who lies in wait for them. There was Religion—some found relief there. But the spire of the church, pointing sternly to the clear sky, was no medicine for him. There was Love.

And at the thought of that word all his soul and body started beating—for he knew he loved Christine and had from the very first. Love should be his healer.

At the turn of the way dipping to the old church a horrid doubt seized him, and he looked desperately about him at a world which was no longer blue and yellow and green, as it was to common men, to happy men, to men unpossessed by poetry and by evil spirits. To him, it was a crimson world, a world of impure purples, of shades which the sun's brush had never shown nor the vat of man yielded.

Suppose Christine should come to him so; not in the wonderful pageant of her womanly purity, but with the taint of—It? Suppose she were marked, his beautiful one, as the landscape was, with the curse which had seized upon him? In that case she would be no guardian angel—but an evil more potent than any which had yet tempted him. Wasn't it a woman who had tempted man in the very beginning of things? The serpent had made her his instrument; she had been the slave of the serpent ever since—the slave of the serpent and the enemy of man. A few hundred years back men had run away from her; some of them did so still—they buried themselves in a monastery.

A monastery! the idea, the very sound of the word came to him as solace—as the thought of a dairy slab on a hot day. If he went and begged for shelter among holy men, perhaps he would be free. The thing on his shoulder—how close it sat!—chuckled.

In the church they were singing a hymn—he hated it. He would not go to meet Love—and Christine. Probably the Christine that he had known in the morning, the Christine who had gone devoutly down the hill to church, was lost to him forever. He would not see her any more in that guise.

He would not meet Christine—not yet. He would defer that final and terrible moment. He turned down to the sea, sank his foot into sand. Golden sand—no, bright serpent green; and buried in it, barely buried, showing frightfully through, were the sins of drowned men. He could write a poem

on drowned men—it would be wonderful, it should make the world shiver and curse. He went down to the sea—it would be blood-red today. His feet were light, so was his head; but his heart—preserving sanity, standing for conscience, sounded a dirge.

He flung himself down and let the world spin round him; a blue world, blue and thick, fleecy white—to free men. To him? He could not give word to all he saw—not even he, with his rich gift of speech and sight. It was all so wonderful—and so wicked. Foam—of wave and cloud! Flutter—of wing and wind! There were degrees of sight—some men saw nothing; some men did nothing but eat and sleep, breathe—and sluggishly die. For him, he saw all that the world had ever seen and been and done—of sinfulness. The whole record of a doomed world spread out before him. If he could only turn it into verse—what a poem! A poem? No! A document—of damnation.

He put his head down on his bent arm, he shut his eyes—and groaned; some men might have said it was a prayer—the very truest because it held no word. If he shut his eyes, he could not see; there was relief, positive freedom in a closed eye. The demon, the sin, or whatever it was—he could not pretend to fathom it—had not the power to twitch his lids. When he shut his eyes he was a sane, clean man again; he was not afraid of meeting Christine.

At the end of ten minutes he opened his eyes on her. She was standing close, looking down, her scarlet-bound prayer-book in her hand. It made, with a red sunshade, her notes of color. For the rest, she was white, in a linen frock that had a classic cling and sheen. And her hat! He had a poet's eyes for seeing the things which women wore. It was a hat of Tuscan straw, just twined about with pointed leaves, of deep green and saffron-yellow. She looked as if she had stepped straight out from a deep frame of many centuries. She was standing close, smiling, staring down—and

thank God she at least had not changed.

He sprang up, pressing his hands across his eyes for a moment—and then grimly facing the inevitable of blood-red sea and sands of serpent green—and the sins of drowned men jutting out like rocks—or were they limbs? He could not say.

Anyway, Christine had not changed; he held on to that sweet fragment of reality.

"How white you are!" she said. "Whiter than my gown," touching it. "Is anything wrong? Have you been working too hard?"

"Yes, yes—too hard. It—went beyond me."

"I know," she nodded. "My father would reach that stage—when you cannot get out another word, when your nose is close at the wall, so to say, and you can't pass through."

"Not quite; with me, words are too many—too lush."

Christine laughed. "You sound like profitable pasture-land."

Her sweet laugh, her light touch, God bless her! He was slowly beginning to be himself again. Love would save him. Slowly the sea began to turn clear blue, a good blue, ever so good. And the sand—it was lint-white, virginal. And his brain cleared; he no longer remembered all the terrible things that dead men had done and suffered. Yet he would never be able to work so well, so beautifully, to such eternity of reputation, with a clean brain. He shot his shoulder up—and Christine, for no reason that she could have given, stepped a pace back from him.

"Don't go away. Sit down. I want to talk to you—so badly I want to talk."

"That is the way of a poet; he wants to talk—to the World or to a Woman," said Christine, sitting down and spreading her milk-white, shining draperies all round her.

"How quaint you are! Where did you learn it? Who taught you?"

He was sitting, too; he had recovered himself, and they might have been a couple of complacent tourists, save

that now and then he looked over his shoulder and she, furtively, maternally, watched him. When a woman loves, she is a mother—more a mother than anything else. And Christine loved this man; she had done so from the very first.

"Who taught me?—no one. Men cannot teach you to be anything but a parrot. People walk about the world making the same neat little speeches all the time and thinking how original they are. I learned of this"—she spread her hands lovingly to the sea—"or those," raising them to the hills.

"The hills today are companies of fairies," said Peter happily. "Do you mind putting your prayer-book away and your sunshade behind you somewhere? I am not in the mood for scarlet."

"You are beingspoiled." Shelaughed and shrugged, but hid the book and sunshade nevertheless.

"That is better." His face relaxed and grew happy. "I want to see nothing but your white skirt and the pale sand."

"That is well enough, but remember we must not stay here long. It is a cold dinner certainly, yet Aunt Ann Grimes does not like it to be kept waiting. Arethusa Miller has a Sunday afternoon out, poor little thing, and Aunt Ann Grimes will be hungering and thirsting to settle in the parlor and open her book of sermons. We had a very poor sermon in church this morning, by the way."

"Preachers have no gift of language," said Peter arrogantly.

"Of course not—only poets; and there is eternal animosity between the poet and the parson, I don't know why. You look tired to death, but if you did a good morning's work it does not matter."

"I did a bad morning's work; don't talk about it. I would rather sit and watch you than talk."

"You may look at me for ten minutes, if it is rest and consolation. After that, we must go home."

"Christine, what brought you to the beach today?"

She blushed; grave lights flickered in her eyes. He had not called her Christine before—yet neither had he called her Miss Verney. They had adroitly evaded naming each other, almost from the first.

"What brought me? Imprudence—and a sense of rebellion. The sermon was dull and the sea beckoned and—well, I saw you on the beach and thought we might as well walk home together."

"That is all?"

"Of course—what else?"

"Nothing—to you. But to me, you came as a guardian angel."

"Exactly—and wings are packed away beneath my bodice. Do they make me round-shouldered?" She straightened her back. "Our ten minutes—of silence—is flying; you are wasting it, spoiling it, by speech."

"Won't you make it twenty? I must speak; there is something to say that may affect our lives."

"You mean that you are going away? But that can be broken to me along the road," she said, making a violent effort to beat the frightened blood back from her cheeks.

And yet she knew he never meant to go away; more, she knew that, even if he wished it, if the world commanded, a word from her lips would bind him forever.

He put his hand toward her, he looked out wildly to see—if water was blue, and sand lint-white. Did sight remain innocent? To his relief, he saw only those things that stupid men see—stupid men; sane and clean and happy men; men who are just like everybody else. That was the better part, after all. He was going to woo and wed—with the rest of the world. Providence had sent him straight to the one woman who had been his from the beginning.

Water was blue and sand lint-white—wooing was sweet and safe. He touched the shining, cool fold of her linen skirt. It had such a white, jewel-like gloss on it—he thought of the bird with the opal breast that had flung itself so ardently into the sky, singing

as it flew. Martyrs sang—as they went to sacrifice. Yet why should he think of martyrs, in this moment of glory?

He was a poet, yet when the great, grave moment came he could plead his suit only in the most limp and halting way.

"Christine! I begged the extra ten minutes for—for love-making; for—courting. A beautiful old word—courting."

"A Sunday recreation, in this part of the world—for rustics," she said lightly. How elaborately her tongue fluttered—to cover the truth. "Simple folk make love on Sundays, not gentle-folk! Aunt Ann Grimes would be horrified."

"Aunt Ann Grimes! Love!" he cried out boisterously.

"Yet there was a young man once," Christine told him, talking quickly, "who adored her. She was simple, you see, and might make love on Sundays. And it was before she became serious and took to chapel-going. He was a farmer's son; it is years ago. And he gave her a sucking-pig and—well, it never went any farther. I think he took to drink or went for a soldier or—"

"To the devil, perhaps; yet Aunt Ann Grimes is hardly the woman to send a man there."

"She will be very angry if we keep dinner waiting." Christine picked up her burdens of scarlet book and sunshade and shook the sand from her crumpled, gleaming skirt.

"Don't go yet; a moment more."

"Not one."

"I am making the most difficult speech of my life, remember. Have a little pity, or I shall go to the wars or—the devil. Poets do—more than most men."

"There is sanity in Sunday dinner," said Christine, starting to walk.

"One more moment." He arose, looking white, tottering—in deadly dread lest his enemy should return, should change the sea and sand to malice and wicked wonder before he won his goddess; this girl who was going

to save him. "A moment, just one for opportunity."

"Opportunity!" she laughed, and turned her face steadfastly to land and lifted her skirt to the line of her ankle.

"Destinies—of people or of nations—may be changed in a moment. I know that; I am wise—with books. But as for people, my world is empty, save for Aunt Ann Grimes and a nightmare which included my Aunt and Uncle Luxmore. You are—well, Adam, to me."

"Then—then Eve." He caught her wrist.

Scarlet fluttered to the sand and two were living their moment. So many men have wooed, so many, many maidens have been won—or lost—but the moment is eternally young. The poor old world may be sick to death with sight and hearing, yet lovers are never cheated of this first fluttering joy. As for Peter Bonsey and Christine, they had loved from the first; it was one of those blest, instinctive matings. The road of life lay all long and flower-decked before them—a road of song and laughter it should be if only— If!

Peter shuddered in the sun; in less than a full minute, in barely the drawing of a breath, he lived his free and delicate, his pure impassioned moment. And then the demon was back, the face of the world began to stretch, to darken and to gibe. He could see the hills rocking their sides with most derisive laughter; rocking their sides and drawing their brows together. As for the sea, heaven only knows what he saw. He wished—to madness—that he could write it all down while it was fresh. He wanted to push Christine away from him, to forget she existed, to rush off for pencil and paper.

Her sweet face had been on his shoulder; it lifted suddenly and he felt a long, frozen quiver run right down her—it went from her pale lips to her little shoe which was half sunk in sand.

"There was the shadow—of a bird, or a sail—on you then. A gull—or a phantom ship. It darkened my eyes as it flew."

"We will go back, love," said Peter

unsteadily, "to—to dinner and to Aunt Ann Grimes."

Aunt Ann Grimes! He thought of her pepper-and-salt hair, of her Sunday frock with the pleated white tucker. There was sanity there. To sit down in the gray and brown living-room with Aunt Ann Grimes and eat cold mutton, that would save him. He laughed—and the shadow lifted. Blood ran into his lips—warming them. Darkness had been only for a moment. He tried to persuade himself that it had been the last moment, that he would never be troubled any more.

He looked about him. The hills were—just hills. There were sheep upon them, they rang with bells. Pensive pasture-land! How lovely it was—and pure!

"So are the sheep upon a thousand hills," he quoted softly.

"We had that in the Psalms this morning," said Christine, looking pleased. "The Bible is the most wonderful book that ever was written."

They went along the road; they were shy and silent and jubilant—they were sure, although no stiff, definite word of betrothal had been spoken. They knew, they had always known; from the day he had seen her sitting in the veranda, vine-leaves dancing a classic measure above her dark hair. That is the unerring way of true love; it needs no elucidation, it never jostles and plagues and misapprehends—overweights a speech or attentuates its meaning.

The road was dusty, hot, deserted. It was Sunday dinner-time.

He took her scarlet burdens from her, slipping the book in his pocket. It was a prayer-book—it should prove a talisman. Thank God the sweet world remained green—of pasture; blue—of little innocent waves; yellow—of the jolly, big, sensible sun.

Suddenly, laughing like a boy, he caught Christine to him and kissed her—it was the most lovely setting for a first caress; sea and sheep-bells sang a lullaby.

It was a first, a long, gaudily colored kiss of utter joy and sweetness and

innocence. She was a wild, untutored thing, and he was a poet; the prim canons of the world would never trouble them. They loved, they would wed; with simplicity, with despatch. The eternal hills, the restless, mutable sea should, year in, year out, mark the lovely progress of their living.

"I have loved you from the very first," he said. "Men have always said that when they woo—but I mean it."

"They have said that, too—yet I believe you," returned Christine.

"The woman always believes, but your confidence is sure grounded."

III

AUNT ANN GRIMES was leaning over the gate and looking expectantly along the gaunt road; all the days were gaunt and the sea was a grave, dull eye—as old men's eyes when the savor of living is worn clean through.

The hills, which had been maidenly sweet in June, matronly full in Autumn, were sharp old women now, in Winter-time. But Aunt Ann Grimes was rarely plagued by imagery; to her, there would have been something dangerous, ungodly, even, in likening the sea and the hills to men and to women. She would have trembled for her wits, or for her soul, or both, had fancy ever run riot.

It was a cold day; no little, nipping kiss of frost in it, no wavering smile of a short-lived sun; a moaning old day, of east winds and a frowning air; the ripe color of the December world was desperate. In this sheltered south country the trees were still clothed, so that the oaks wore marvelous mantles. Yet now and then, when the wind blew keenest, and straddled and screamed across the startled country, companies of curling leaves—yellow and brown, worn to death—flew from the branches and whirled midway between the hard earth and the pitiless sky. It seemed as if they could not fall, would never be allowed to rest—to die. They were like Noah's dove, finding no foothold.

Aunt Ann Grimes kept looking and looking along the road, yet the only living creatures she saw were two cows who stood nose to nose, close to the green, hard trunk of a pollard-tree. Their brown hides were being turned to fire by the sinking sun; it was a savage, round-eyed sun and everything it touched it turned to wicked, rosy color—so that the Winter world was all war and rapine. Every little pool lay patched with blood, and a trail, eloquent of slaughter, stretched across the black sea.

"It ain't a kind day fer a bride's home-comin'," said Aunt Ann Grimes to herself, looking forth with a shivering look and gripping her hands across the gray bar of the wooden gate.

The wind was rising, it blew a regular dirge; it seemed to warn the bride away from the old stone house, from the wan, wide world of hilltop and many waters, from the anxious old aunt who kept staring along the road.

"They be full arf-an-hour behind time," she said, screwing up her eyes that she might see farther; but the road wound away, quite desolate.

She fell to thinking of those other occasions when she had stood at the gate, waiting for people to return, or watching them depart forever. So much—everything—that was vital to her had traveled that road; it was strewn with tears and laughter. She had waited once before for a bride. That was in Summer-time and the bride had been Christine's mother. The funeral procession of that bride had dragged its lugubrious way from the gate only twelve months later.

"She warn't happy," said Aunt Ann Grimes, looking at the hills and at the sea and thinking of her sister, that radiant, foolish beauty. "Gentle an' simple wun't mix, do what you may."

She contemplated love and matrimony, with a jubilant feeling of complete relief at her own escape. She was one of those meager, placid women to whom love meant very little—meant nothing.

Her own lover had gone along that

road, years ago; as a girl, she had lived at a farm a little higher up. There was very little tenderness on her lip as she stood thinking of young George Spiller; their love-making had been brief, had been disjointed throughout, had been a perfect plague. At the first serious tiff they had parted—with mutual relief. It was many years ago, yet she could see him quite clearly going along the road; handsome and sulky—a big, masterful fellow of whom she was well quit. He had gone for a soldier and had in all probability been killed; or he had stayed in foreign parts and married another woman—Aunt Ann Grimes felt very sorry for that woman. She was sorry for all married women, Christine included. Looking along the gaunt road, her sweetest memory was of Sunday mornings, when, dressed in her best black silk gown and with a bonnet plentifully besprinkled with beads, she had stepped into the funereal wagonette with neighbors of kin devoutness and driven off to chapel. She had fed her soul completely with the whining prayers of the local preacher and with his wire-drawn discourses. She had found a peculiar and subtle comfort in three-syllable words which she did not understand. Never had she fluttered for a lover as she did for the sanctimonious and confused eloquence of the local preacher. There was a promise of the world to come—or a strong threat—in the very pulpit cushion he thumped. Yet somewhere, at the very back of her head, Aunt Ann Grimes dared to rebel at the prospect of heaven. It was a place of no activities; there would be nothing to kill and to clean. When, at the chapel, they gave out the hymn about endless Sabbaths she was hard put to it to choke back an involuntary groan. An idie heaven to her was—hell. But she knew she would be cast forth from the chapel if she dared to say so.

Something came briskly along the road at last. In a lull of the wind she caught the clean clitter-clatter of the horses' hoofs on the dry road; by puckering her eyes, she saw the knot

of the driver's whip. The married pair were coming home.

She hurried back to the house and had just got in and taken off her wrappings and tickled up the fire into red winks and wide welcoming stretches of the mouth when the door opened and Christine ran in, her husband behind her, and wraps and luggage and the cold wind, the happy bustle of arrival. They all twittered and chattered and fluttered at once; the old house was a bird's big nest.

As Peter shut the door and threw his greatcoat on the settle he felt that he shut it on all subtle difficulties, on every insidious devil. His devils were so insidious that they had no name. They were elusive; you couldn't catch them by the leg and label them. He rather envied men whose sins might be docketed. There was neatness about sins of that sort—and a hope of redemption.

But this was not a place nor an hour for devils. He looked gratefully about the sensible brown room; it was so respectable, so everyday, it was just like dear Aunt Ann Grimes. How could a man be complex in such a setting? Thank God a man couldn't. He burst out laughing, and Christine, who had just come downstairs, quickly turned her head.

"Why do you laugh?"

"Because I am happy. Would you have a better reason, darling?"

"I wish it were the only one—ever," she said, looking thoughtfully at the long twisted log of oak at which the red fire fed, "but laughter covers so much; it is—a pall sometimes."

Aunt Ann Grimes, measuring the tea from an inlaid caddy into the best Worcester pot, looked at her anxiously.

"I don't see what call you've got ter talk o' funeral trappin's, Christine," she said reprovingly.

And then they all laughed and drew in to the long table. It was loaded with good things. There were fowls and a ham and cakes and preserves and cream; all the things on which Aunt Ann Grimes prided herself, and which Peter's town palate loved. And as the

meal went on Arethusa Miller, promoted to a cap with streamers, kept bringing in fresh relays of hot cakes and little toothsome surprises between covers.

"The Englishman's great moral safeguard is his perfect gift of feeding," said Peter gravely, cutting off a final slice of ham. "We are the only nation that truly understands that delightfully epicurean phrase, 'a good table'. And tomorrow is Sunday; that also is a national institution; no other nation is so miserable as we are on Sunday—and so gloriously happy in its misery. The pavements of London on a Sunday are the most extraordinary sight. No man can say that he has seen the wonders of the world until he has walked through the city on a Sunday. And it is all our own, this lugubrious and intoxicating day—the Scotch people attempt it, but they overlay it with grim emphasis. I shall go to church tomorrow with Christine."

This last was the only sentence which Aunt Ann Grimes understood or approved. She looked along the table at him quite fondly.

"An' you wun't mind a cold dinner arterward?" she said. "I've niver bin one ter countenance cookin' on the Lord's Day."

"I should consider the cooking even of a potato to be a blot on the occasion," said Peter heartily. "How nice this is!" he looked round the old room, which was dimpled and made youthful by firelight. "Why did I not come here years ago, and why did we ever leave it, Christine, even for a wedding-tour?"

"I be all of a twitch ter hear tell o' your travels," said Aunt Ann Grimes, beaming lovingly on the bride. "I reckon you've sin all as the round world's got ter show."

"I saw a great deal more—I always do," Peter told her gravely—and this interruption she politely ignored.

She could never pretend or hope to understand Christine's husband. In the first place, he was a man—and man was a riddle not worth the solving. In the second, he was a gentleman—a per-

verted male type she distrusted. In the third, he was a poet—and a poet was an individual with a tincture of mad disorder and of worldly leaven. So far as she liked Peter Bonsey, she liked him despite himself and in violence to her own religious instincts. She was quite sure that the local preacher would not approve of him, and she half-believed that somewhere in the Bible, if only she could lay her finger on it, there was a text which condemned poets to everlasting fire, together with liars, drunkards and all others who lived loosely. Her attitude toward Peter today was exactly what her attitude twenty years back had been to Christine's father.

"I ain't niver bin sur far as Lunnon," she said seriously, "but I be well read in books o' travel. Theer wur a cast-off missionary come ter our chapel larst Spring. He showed us lantern-slides o' the heathen afore his conversion ter religion an' decent clothin'. You an' me'll wag our tongues off afore we're done, Christine, I reckon; theer hev bin a sight o' happenin's since you went away. Thomas Ticknor be dead, and Matildy Morrell's in the 'sylum at larst, a pore, daft body—we wun't hear no more o' her mad songs along the seashore."

"What songs?" asked Peter, kindly.

"Didn't you ever come across Matilda Morrell?" Christine opened her glorious eyes on him. How lovely she was, this young, sweet wife of his, with the firelight frolicking over her. "She was mad or a genius—which?"

"It is a matter of environment," he shrugged. "In Fleet street, a genius; the new brand, until they bring out another. In rustic districts, the village idiot; which is a happier lot, because it is permanent and there is no competition."

"She was crossed in love——"

"A necessary condiment to the dish."

"And she had a store of wonderful folk-songs; sea-songs, you know—all about wreckage and driftwood and mourning souls in the offing, and——"

"A reglar string o' sinful gibberish. I niver heerd the like," said Aunt Ann Grimes curtly. "An' Dannie Large, he broke his leg harvestin', an'——"

"Poor Large! Has he broken his leg?"

"He be gittin' about now agen, my dear, but I've had a sight o' trouble on the farm. Theer wur no call ter worret you about it, an' I be strange wi' a pen at the best o' times."

"I like Large," said Peter peacefully. "We must look him up on the way home from church tomorrow."

Daniel Large managed the little farm. With Aunt Ann Grimes and Arethusia Miller and Walter Shuttle, swineherd and cowman, he made up the pastoral ménage of this charming place. To Peter, the farm, the sea, the hills, the clean, briskly-moving rustic figures and, beyond all, Christine remained largely a fairy pageant. He wondered—and dreaded—in fanciful trains of thinking—if some day he would wake up and find it all gone; find himself in chambers near the Embankment, going to his club, looking up editors, indulging himself with long wild railings at fate and his own particular temperament with Ralph Pryor—who was always patient, if a little too sensible. An excess of sensibility imperiled friendship and would ruin love. He adored Christine for her beauty, but more and most for her exquisite eternal wildness, her difference—the intangible something she had caught from the silver sea and the shimmering hills. It had been a delight to take Christine, in her virgin wildness of impressions, all over the Continent, to show her great cities and glorious buildings, whose first joy and wonder were long since worn away for him. It had been an even greater and more subtle indulgence to delve with her into little byway villages—places that had not changed in the least through centuries and where the women were somehow kin with her. For she was quite a classic—this bewildering English bride of his. By rights, she should have carried a pitcher on her lovely head—and trod

the wine-press. She was both pagan and biblical.

She was a sport and, looking across the plentifully spread table from her to Aunt Ann Grimes, he could not possibly believe that the same blood ran in them.

He and Christine had scampered through Europe—laughing, loving, all the way, eternally happy, save once or twice. He remembered that once or twice, and shivered. But it would be all right now—he was back in a pastoral country. He was away, forever, from the varied and enchanting scenes of his flushed youth. He was going to settle down, to be a semi-squire, in a modest way; no, to be a yeoman, for that sounded more distant, safe and primitive. Tomorrow he would go to church with Christine; every Sunday he would go to church. It would be all right. He was safe, free. Surely the—the torture—had not crossed the Channel with him. And yet, as he fought it all out in his heart, as he crumbled his last bit of bread on the cloth, setting the crumbs in fantastic patterns, while Aunt Ann Grimes discoursed eloquently on the dairy and the kitchen-garden and the horrible larder sins of Arethusa Miller, he was not sure. And the wind, which had been a lute around the house only five minutes before, took to croaking, took to odd, guttural merriment.

Tomorrow he would go to church and he would go and talk to Daniel Large. He loved the man—a rough-hewn fellow, a being who seemed to have sprung straight from the great Saxon hills, who was before the Conquest, as it were. A great, gentle brute; calm-eyed, like a bullock, and yet with a touch of savagery. Peter loved to hear him swear, at the cattle or the swineherd, liked to see the cruel lines of his massive wrist. Men of this sort were free from devils. Their crimes were clear, clean-cut—so that they might catch them, twist their necks and be done.

He suddenly got up, scraping his chair harshly on the flags. "I am going to work for a bit before bedtime, dearest," he said, turning rather mourn-

fully to Christine, his eyes licking up all the lines of her face—as the flames from the wide hearth did. Peter was thinking how everything found such keen joy in her beauty, and was wondering how he would put the idea into perfect shape. He wanted to write it down before he lost it. In a moment or two he would find it an absurd idea, not worth preserving; at this particular moment it appeared to hold the elements of eternity. His muse plagued and enraptured him—the two women had become less than nothing, the table was a Gargantuan affront. He wanted to get clean away.

He was gone, in a flash; gone so suddenly that Aunt Ann Grimes was aggrieved and startled. Hers was the type for deliberation, for repetition. You spoke of a thing ponderously before you did it and you repeated yourself many times—more for your own enlightenment than for the benefit of your audience. She had so wanted to press on him a final cup of tea—the last in the pot and the strongest, the ultimate cherished drain which the ardent housekeeper hates to waste. She dribbled it into her own cup when her niece refused it.

Christine was looking anxiously at the panel of the study door, through which Peter had vanished. She had seen on his face the white, dragged look which had been there more than once before. She had learned to dread it, to hate it, because she could not in the least understand it.

"Don't you fret fer him," said Aunt Ann Grimes cheerfully, and watching her. "I had a fire kindled ther an' another in the best parlor. Nothin's worse fer a man than forcin' the fancy on cold feet, as you m'say. I be accustomed to scholars an' sech; theer niver wur a worse one than your pore feyther. A sensible 'ooman do give in ter their ways. You an' me'll goo and bide in the best room, dearie, while Arethusa clears away. That gell, she do cock an ear fer ivery word as falls from her betters."

"I've brought a lace collar and cuffs of white Maltese for Arethusa," said

Christine, rousing up, "and a little neck-lace from Rome, with a cross on it."

Aunt Ann Grimes tightened her lip at the double mention of Rome and of finery. Arethusa went to chapel, more from diplomacy than choice, and was fondly believed to be a young woman of serious views, despite her little table failings—temptations to pick at the breast of a fowl, or to slice the candied peel from the top of a cake.

"'Tis a pity, Christine. She'll on'y be gittin' a sweetheart an' then her troubles'll begin—an' mine, fer the matter o' thet. Once a gell's head be filled wi' love-makin', theer ain't a crack nor cranny left fer the washtub or the pastry-board."

As she spoke, she led the way proudly into the best parlor—that terrible room of starch and steel and old photographs and bound sermons and devotional chromos. Peter had once said that a single sight of those chromos was enough to turn the whole world pagan. Christine remembered how frightened she had been of this place, as a little child, and how she had hated it. Once she had come in stealthily with a large dinner knife and cut a long slit in the carpet, out of pure, impish malice and the fervent desire to know what it felt like to be a great criminal.

"But Arethusa will be getting a sweetheart, anyway, before very long," she said, with the wise, superior air of the very young matron.

Already, Christine felt immeasurably removed from Aunt Ann Grimes, and already Aunt Ann Grimes was intensely sorry for Christine. The ditch that is dug between married and single stretched between them. It is impassable—it is as the gulf between Lazarus and Dives; and each woman likes to think herself on the side of Lazarus.

"I dunno nothin' whyfore. I had my fill o' sweetheartin', an' it wur nothin' but nausea. The men, they fills you up wi' sweet words—'tis a regular bilious attack."

They were sitting one on each side of the fire, each with an arm-chair covered with horse-hair, with a stiff cushion and crocheted antimacassar. Aunt

Ann Grimes had on her best Sunday silk, worn shiny and enriched with a trimming of steel beads. She had spread a large white pocket-handkerchief on her lap, before folding her hands peacefully on her stomach. This was her favorite attitude for conversation. She looked so decorous and coldly twinkling that the idea of her being filled up with sweet words was grotesque. Christine nearly laughed aloud—and she wondered what George Spiller had been like.

"I ain't fer sayin'," said Aunt Ann Grimes magnanimously, "but what somewomen must marry. That's nater. But I be grateful ter Providence fer sparin' me. The men be more trouble than arf a dozen babies; they leans hard on you in trouble an' brushes you off as ef you was a fly in times o' peace. I do trust an' pray, my dear," she leaned impulsively forward and put her rough fingers on the bride's brown, slim wrist, "as he's kind to you, though 'tis early days yet fer tiffs."

"Peter! Is he kind? Dear Aunt Ann Grimes, he adores me."

"They all does. Theer wur a time when George Spiller thought less than nothin' o' twistin' the neck of a fowl fer me. He'd walk fower miles an' more wi' joy ter do it, an' make love all the time as the crittur wur droopin' an' squawkin'. 'Tis when the bloom's wore off as they begins."

"The bloom goes right through; it is the very fabric," said Christine dreamily.

"He be a promisin' man." Aunt Ann Grimes stared at the fire; it was a sedate fire and burned rigidly within bars, whereas, in the rude old living-room, just through the wall, woodash and embers fell with license on the hot red bricks; and the burning wood told its deep joy in varying notes of tick and crack and splutter.

"He bain't one fer strong drink. I remember thet, in this very room larst June he sez ter me, 'I never drinks beer when I can get nectar.' Be thet a teetotal drink, Christine?"

"It is a drunken drink." Christine showed her charming white teeth—

little teeth, not so very even, or they would have been cold, a touch cruel, with a suggestion of the false; very even teeth have all this. "Did Peter say that? How nice of him, and just like Peter."

"An' he don't play cards, as fur as I knows," continued the other, bent on the total of Peter's lack of misdoing.

"He barely knows one suit from another."

"You didn't when you was married, Christine."

"And I don't now, dear. Be easy. Peter tried to teach me, although neither of us cared, but I got so mixed up with spades and clubs that we desisted."

"I niver sur much as handled 'un," said Aunt Ann Grimes, with a shudder. "Folks, they goos dancin' an' card-playin, an' a-readin' o' vain tales right ter the gates o' hell. Leastways, thet hev bin the righteous burden o' my up-bringin'."

"Peter dislikes all games and disapproves of novels and drinks nothing but *eau sucrée*—when he can get it. Fortunately, he cannot get it often, as it is very bad for his digestion."

"Be that teetotal, too?"

"About the same as nectar. We have finished the tale of Peter's crimes, or his lack of them. You see now how happy I am going to be?"

"I sees no reason why not, unless it be his trick o' writin' what makes fer strife. Thur's allus summat. Sometimes 'tis the lack o' money perishes lawful wedlock, but he've got a private fortin, bain't 'un?"

"Yes. A poet's mite—to him; to you and to me—opulence. Just five pounds a week."

Aunt Ann Grimes screwed her mouth and let out a sound which, in a female less decorous, might have been called a whistle.

"Five pounds a week! What be goin' ter do wi' all thet money, Christine? Don't run inter extravagance an' ruin, my dear."

"But it isn't much, really; it is very little. People starve on it—Peter very nearly did. And starvation on five

pounds a week is so much harder than starvation on nothing. Peter has told me so."

"Pack o' nonsense! Five pounds a week!" Aunt Ann Grimes repeated the sum with savor. "Well! I niver did! An' wi' all thet comin' in, what do he want ter set an' write for? Men works fer bread, not pleasure. 'Tis Adam's curse."

"Poets work for madness and joy; they cannot help it. And as for money very often it doesn't bring them in a penny. They sometimes pay people to listen."

Aunt Ann Grimes stared at the fire and then at her niece.

"I b'lieve," she said weightily at last, "thet Matildy Morrell would 'a' wrote, given she'd bin taught ter hold a pen. More'n once I seed her scratchin' in the sand when the tide wur out, an' singin' like a crack pate all the while."

Christine laughed.

"I think it's extremely likely. Peter would declare himself kin with Matilda Morrell."

"I do hope, fer your sake, love, as he ain't. You terrify me, Christine, wi' your wild talk. This young man o' yourn—a husban' he be now, clean dropped from nowheres on us both—he came swingin', like a caterpillar from an oak bough. Ain't he got any friends? I wish we'd asked your Uncle Luxmore's consent afore you married 'un."

"My Uncle Luxmore!" Christine laughed again and gave a pretty shiver.

"Just think what Peter spared me! But for him I should have gone to live with those people at Finchley. I talked wildly of dying, of slowly starving in the plentiful bosom of the hills—but I was too young to do it. And then Peter came—from the clouds, as you say—"

"I said from nowheres; I niver pledged myself ter clouds."

"He came and saved me and I'm ever so happy; entirely happy—almost."

She said the last word softly; it made a stifled sound of utter fright in her throat.

She looked toward the closed door and wondered, wondered with an

anxiety fit to choke her, fit to make her start up weeping and run off to see just what Peter was doing and feeling in the study. Was he happy? Was he thinking or writing—or was he just brooding, with that terrible look on his face which she so hated and so dreaded and so shrank from? It was a look which removed Peter from her; it took him away—oh, leagues and leagues.

What was he doing in the study and—was he alone? Yes, it had already come to that—*was Peter alone?* She was oppressed, in moments of horror, of vague terror and mystery, by the suggested presence of the Third.

"It don't sim nateral fer him ter be without kith nor kin," said Aunt Ann Grimes.

"But I've got only you, dear. His father and mother are dead, as mine are, and he was an only child, as I am. There are lonely people in the world, you know—solitary without discredit. And sometimes, by Providence, they happen on each other, as we did, and marry and are happy, as we are. As we are."

She repeated it, she drove it, like a nail in at her temple—the fact that she was completely, completely happy. And she told herself stoutly that she would suffer no elusive, shadowy horror to get between her and perfect joy—a shadowy horror and shapeless.

She looked round the ugly room and nearly screamed. It saved her, the ugly room; for the first time in her life she was grateful to it, warm with it. Nothing uncanny could enter here. This was a place entirely apart from suggested ghosts and threatening demons. It was all bare and clean of the morbid, swept of the weird; perhaps because there were no books in it. In books lay the troubled souls of dead men.

She looked at the round table, with the bulky volume of sermons, so sleekly gilt, so unctuous. But you couldn't call those thoughts. From the literary point of view, they were terrible, they stood outside criticism; they were so frankly bad—just as a

bound volume of *Punch* is so frankly humorous—or believed to be.

The room saved her—in part. But for the stolid ugliness of the room she would have run out screaming, run into the study. And Aunt Ann Grimes was the completing touch of sanity. Imagination withered in the sober presence of Aunt Ann Grimes. Christine looked affectionately at the figure in the other arm-chair; it was so comfortably commonplace, cut with such precision. It had the exact angles of all the other sensible old maids. One would suppose that in cutting out commonplace people Providence had one set of patterns—the plump, matronly pattern, the severe-spinster pattern, the respectable father-of-a-family pattern, the good-little-boy or girl pattern—and all the rest.

Aunt Ann Grimes was hardly angular, but she was notably virginal; celibacy, of a savage sort, was eloquent all over her. For the rest, she was clean and brown and rosy; her wholesome face told a beautiful tale of the hills. It told of brisk dawns and a happy falling to sleep at sunset. She was so good, so sane, so sensible. Providence had cut her out immutably safe—she was of that pattern; her lines would never go askew. How blest they were, these clean, plain, ponderous women! And yet—Peter! One wouldn't have married Peter for worlds. Christine shivered and drew in at the homely fire, but she wanted him—free. She wanted him all to herself.

"Ain't he got a friend or relative? It do sim sing'lar," persisted Aunt Ann Grimes.

"Yes, there is a man he loves very much—and laughs at; a critic. Ralph Pryor is his name."

"What be a critic, Christine?"

"A critic takes the works of poets and picks it to pieces—and sometimes puts it together again to show them how much better he could do it if he chose. He discredits you with all the vulgar subtleties you never meant. Anyway, that is Peter's definition."

"Why dunnot the critic work for hisself?"

"The poet so much wishes that he would, but, generally, he has tried and failed."

"You can't so much blame him fer thet, my dear. Though why he don't start on a fresh job beats me. I knowed a gell in my youth—she wur sister o' the young George Spiller I've telled you on, as made pastry like a cannon-ball. You might ha' flung it from here ter the beach without breakin'. Yet she wur the best hand at butter-makin' in the whole county. Warn't thet a sight better than fer her ter bide idle an' pick holes in other folks' pastry? Why don't this Mr. Pryor turn his hand ter summat else?"

"He is too old, for one thing—past fifty."

"Thet ain't so pertikler old." Aunt Ann Grimes bridled; she was sensitive about her age—in the spinster way. "I'll be fifty-five next May Day, Christine, but more'n one person has remarked that I don't look thirty."

"I don't think you do, dear. But, when I come to think of it, Peter told me that Mr. Pryor was old for his age. And he is rich, too, and that makes a difficulty when it comes to really earnest work. He has two thousand a year."

"Two thousand a year! Riches do heap theirselves on riches."

"And he is devoted to Peter, and thinks his work wonderful."

"He ain't niver read none of it, my dear. Not as I've a taste fer poetry; the Bible be my book."

"The Bible is wonderful poetry, Aunt Ann Grimes."

"I should be sorry ter think so, Christine, an' ef they teaches you thet at church, chapel 'ud be better fer your soul."

"They don't; they try to make us forget it at church. I wish Peter would come in."

"Wi' five pounds a week fer a fortnight," said Aunt Ann Grimes, "theer's no call fer him ter labor by candlelight, on a heavy meal. Thet's the way them writin' folk kill theirselves untimely; they lashes their stomicks ter death, as

you'm say, fer the brain ter ride cock horse."

"You have a rare vein of imagery, Aunt Ann Grimes," said a voice at her elbow. "It is rude, but rich. I've heard you say delightful things. Why do I not keep a note-book, and write a novel? If you and I would collaborate, I would lash my stomach to some purpose."

Peter was in the room, on them both, before they were aware. They had been crouching over the cheerful fire and the lamp was low. Moreover, he had a feline trick of softness. Christine looked up gladly—anxiously. She pushed her chair back—and he made a third at the fire; sitting where he did, he was in shadow. The fire was on his face, on his quivering mouth and prominent eye, on his odd, upstanding bush of dull brown hair—flaxen hair, gray hair, hair the color of powdered spices—which was it? No one could possibly call Peter handsome. But he was odd, he was distinctive, and this was so much better.

"It is our first evening at home," said Christine fondly.

Aunt Ann Grimes rustled in her chair. The bride and bridegroom cherished the respectable crackle of her Sunday skirt.

"I'll be lookin' arter Arethusa Miller," she said, half-rising. "Thet gell do oftentimes fall asleep wi' her head on the kitchen-table. She'll be settin' the place afire one o' these yere nights."

"Don't go." Christine stretched across her husband and caught at a fold of the silk skirt. "Don't feel that we'd like to be alone. I should hate that."

"But, dearie, married folks has their own affairs ter talk on." Aunt Ann Grimes looked doubtfully at Peter.

"I haven't an affair in the world, thank heaven," he said. "Do sit down again."

"I'll goo an' fetch a bit o' work. I can't set twirlin' my thumbs."

"It becomes a little monotonous"—Peter twirled his—"but do try just for one evening." And Aunt Ann Grimes sat down.

Yet she was obviously on the fidget; the easy attitude of the feminine and the familiar had gone. She had been carefully trained in the belief that it was only decorous to leave courting couples and newly married folks to fire-side solitude.

Peter sat staring at the fire; so did Christine, so did Aunt Ann Grimes, and they all saw different things in it. Peter and Christine saw much that made them vaguely afraid; yet elation was mixed with his terror. He saw in the flames long, fluttering sheets of immortal manuscript. It should be wonderful, the work he was presently going to do in this solitary, bluff old farmhouse. It should stir the world—stir it to more impudent sins, more original and fantastic crimes than it had ever yet attempted. Sober old world! He would startle it. What a wonderful power he wielded! His shoulder went twitching up and down. Aunt Ann Grimes, stirred from fire pictures—of soldiers on foreign service and a sulky, departing lover—remarked on it.

"You've got a touch o' rheumatics," she said. "Christine did orter rub thet shoulder. It keeps all on the jump; 'tislike live blood what somefolks gits in the eye."

Christine was staring at it, too. Her lovely face grew tragic, grew pale, grew afraid. And the wind round the house threatened her with many, many things. And the sea on the beach, breaking, breaking, hinted at more. How mournful the wind was and the sea, how wise—yet vague and mysterious; hinting, yet never quite telling. She watched Peter's shoulder go shooting up and down.

"I've done some lovely work to-night," he said, turning to her. "I think Pryor would be pleased. No," he burst out, loudly laughing, "Pryor would be shocked, anguished—to death. He would wring his hands over me. He would refuse to give me a notice in any of the papers he writes for. Pryor is a great power in the literary land, but he is too respectable."

"You can't be too respectable," said Aunt Ann Grimes, sitting up and

turning her honest, puzzled eyes on him. "'Tis accordin' ter the word o' God ter be respectable."

"And the policeman enforces it," said Peter, "but in the world where I have been tonight there were no policemen—only glorified thieves and cut-throats: Sin in a gleaming white robe, with a harp in its hand."

"He doesn't mean it, really." Christine was smiling faintly at her kinswoman. "It is merely the way of a poet—you will have to get used to him."

"You be but a pair o' vain talkers, my dear. 'Tis youth an' will pass. I takes little enough notice."

As Aunt Ann Grimes spoke, as she pursed her lip and rather nervously knotted her fingers, Peter looked at her very strangely; looking from her to Christine, and then round the room—as if they and it were quite new; were fascinating and novel and fearful. His eye and his mouth were jubilant, yet he shivered; they saw his palsied hands clutch around his knees.

"Pryor would say I was desecrating my great gift," he continued, grinning at the coals. "He has a regular stock of those ponderous and most complimentary phrases. Dear old Pryor! He has been bound down all his life by that hag, Conscience."

Aunt Ann Grimes fidgeted on her chair; when you spoke of conscience she was on sure ground—and she was possessed now by the fixed idea that Peter had subtly assaulted her fetich.

"Poets are quite mad," said Christine, smiling wanly across the hearth. "Take no notice, Aunt Ann Grimes. Peter, you must not shock her; you don't mean half you say."

"If I could only say all I mean," he retorted, "I would sway the world, swing it on its string—as it were. Darling!" he put his flushed face very close to hers, "I have done such lovely work tonight. How sharp and clear and waxen you are, Christine—a piece of statuary! You are cold. I have more sense for color than form. The art of the sculptor is frozen; Wedgwood china leaves me unmoved."

The little, homely, ugly room was ticking with hot coals as they happily wasted themselves, comforted and made sure by the presence of an eminently sensible single woman. Christine looked at the chromos, at the carpet, at the dreadfully floral vases on the white marble mantelshelf—at Aunt Ann Grimes, in her black silk gown and her pleated white tucker. It was all so sane, so safe, and Peter was—so mad. Peter was possessed with devils. And neither the room nor Aunt Ann Grimes could save him. And she, who loved him so, she could not save him either.

The wind went wailing round the house, wringing its hands and shaking its head, as it were. And the sea broke its very heart along the line of pale beach.

The more deeply she loved Peter the plainer grew her horrid gift of sight. Evidently it was given only to those who loved him best to see. She loved him so and she—*she saw*. Her eyes were on him; long, ancient tragedies lay in their depths. When a woman loves and suffers she bears in each throe the accumulated anguish of all the women who have ever suffered with Love.

He was staring at the fire, his lips moved, his eyes shone. Now and again he nodded his head with pleased emphasis; evidently he was reciting all that he had written tonight, all that he would write tomorrow.

"I shall go back in a minute," he said suddenly. "I think I could finish it tonight. And even if dawn found me sitting dead in the chair I should have left my gift behind me—to damn the world with."

Aunt Ann Grimes had her shrewd eyes fixed on him. The terrible idea was taking shape in her head that Peter was one of the foredoomed unregenerate.

"Don't go back tonight—if you love me," said Christine, looking at his restless shoulder.

"Dear! I love you, but it is nothing to my love of giving myself to the world. Can't you see that? Haven't I made it all clear?"

"Oh, Peter, don't go back, please. It is our first evening at home."

He hardly seemed to hear her.

"Directly I got into the study," he said, in a hushed, fervent way, speaking as men speak at a chancel gate, "it came—inspiration, you know; the beautiful, terrible something that helps me, that whips me on: flays and heals me in the same lash."

His shoulder! His shoulder! She fell back in the chair and gripped her hands round the arms of it.

She had always seen—from the first. She had loved him—from the first. As they sat in the veranda, on the day of meeting, in the first shy hour of growing knowledge, vine-leaves had twisted themselves on his shoulder and taken definite form. And when, on the beach, in happy, Sunday stillness, he had told his love, something—a gull, a ship, a devil—had brushed his shoulder, darkened her eyes, turned for a moment their perfect bliss to very gall. And on their honeymoon, in little ghastly moments, it had come there so clearly, the shape, the sinister something—which was nothing; and yet everything, the—*the devil*. Yet could one call it a devil? It was so infrequent, so fitting, so vague, and he seemed quite unconscious of it, and nobody else saw.

He was looking at her, his eyes were strange, she no longer knew them; another soul was looking through.

"You have not changed," he said, half in horror, half in joy. "You remain just the same; it is the face I first saw framed in vine-leaves—Greek, beautiful. I hope you won't change, Christine."

"Why should I, dear? It—it is getting late, Peter."

"Yes, very late." He looked at his watch irritably. "I wish that you and Aunt Ann Grimes and that girl Arethusa Miller would be off to bed. Lock up the house and leave everything dark and quiet, for the love of heaven. What an oddity she is, that Arethusa Miller! I saw her in the big room as I came through; a monster, a jewel—of human difference. All her features are on a

new plan, as it were. I never noticed it before."

"Arethusa be a homely gell," granted Aunt Ann Grimes, "but I've met worse. She don't squint an' she ain't got a hare-lip; I've knowed maidens wi' both. You remember Charlotty Dudd, Christine? Thet 'ooman had a fearsome squint, but it didn't hinder her from settlin' well in life. I can't say as I iver felt at ease wi' Charlotty; you niver knowed ef she wur lookin' at you or squintin' through the winder, or cockin' an eye to the picter on the wall."

She laughed, rather uncomfortably; she was pulling the front breadth of her Sunday skirt into little pleats, pleating it with fumbling fingers, and she looked at Peter anxiously. She could not read the riddle of his face; she was accustomed to the countenances of sane, clean men—faces large lettered like a child's copy-book.

Suddenly she bent forward and touched his shoulder, frowning as she did it, and screwing her lip till it looked white and puckered, a cobbled seam. Christine bent forward, too—she watched and waited.

"You be all covered wi' fluff or white-wash or—summat," said Aunt Ann Grimes, rubbing the cloth with housewifely ardor. "It stood up like mildew on your shoulder, as I'm alive, but—theer ain't nothin' theer. It looked like a patch o' dirty white. Thet's curious."

She was touching his shoulder, had her fingers in—It. How could she; how dared she?

Christine arose, quivering, to move the lamp, to bring Peter into a bare, candid, yellow circle. She would see, she would know the worst, or she would find out the best—which should be nothing. She was telling herself piteously that it was nothing, nothing; it was only the way Peter sat. He had a little trick of twisting crooked; you only noticed it sometimes.

"For mercy's sake hold that lamp steady, my dear, or you'll let it drop," cried Aunt Ann Grimes from her corner by the fire. "You look fair wore out,

Christine. We'd all best be off to bed."

"In a minute, dear, only a minute. I want to—to warm my feet."

"You've hed 'em set on the bar o' the fender all the evenin', love, an' it's fidgeted me purty nigh ter death. I can't abide ter see boots rubbin' on a polished fender. Your feet didn't ought ter be cold."

The lamp was close behind Peter—close; a homely light, without a wink. Christine sat and looked at him and waited.

"I should like to read old Pryor what I have written tonight," he said. "How shocked he'd be—and pained and proud. Sometimes I used to catch Pryor looking at me hard, as if he felt afraid. Goodness knows why. He was an odd chap."

"I should like to see him," said Christine, flushing, looking ardent. "I want to see him very much."

She instantly caught at Pryor; he was a straw, he was salvation. Perhaps Pryor saw, too, perhaps he could help; very likely he knew. He had been mixed up in all Peter's past life, had known him from boyhood. The idea suddenly possessed her that this thing on Peter's shoulder was a Sin. He had done something terrible and it was not expiated. She hungered and thirsted for Pryor. He would know, he would tell her.

"Let me see him—soon," she said feverishly.

"In the Summer, dear one. I don't want to be bothered with him just now. I want to do my work."

Even as he spoke a queer flicker passed over Peter; it might have been firelight—yet it left him subtly changed; it brought him back and made him nearer, all at once. He was just Peter, her own possession.

"You haven't changed a bit, Christine." He looked at her lingeringly, with exotic, spiritual appetite, as men look at great works of art. "Not a bit—I pray God you won't. It is one of the principal bogies of my life—that you will change. This dread sits on my pillow, jogs my lids at dawn. But,

darling, you haven't changed—not a bit."

"You are just as beautiful and sweet and pure as ever—I wouldn't have you any other way. Never mind work—I'll not write another line. I'll live on Love—angels' diet. Let Arethusa Miller swill out the ink-pot tomorrow. Don't, if you really love me, turn into a hag, sweetheart—with a new and terrifying ugliness; a distracting, fascinating and morbid something which no woman has ever shown before and which I shall never escape."

"Christine," said Aunt Ann Grimes, bridling for the family beauty, "will be handsome till her dyin' day. She's got good features an' thet's the battle, arter all. Theer be no true wearin' to them flimsy milk-an'-roses beauties, wi' a pug nose an' a mouth all shapes. They be overblown by thirty."

Peter laughed.

"I wouldn't love you overblown, Christine, darling. Keep every petal—for my sake."

The lamp was close behind him; he sat in frank yellow light and—*and it had gone*. His shoulder was sharp, was clear, was without uncanny tenant. It had all been fancy—what a fool she had been! Her eyes had played some wicked trick. Peter was just like other men, all the other men; he was like—Daniel Large! She laughed out loud. She blessed the lamp—a candid, sane and hideous thing. She blessed the room—which insisted on all the respectable, well-ordered senses; which seemed to shout of Sunday afternoons and sleepy sermon-reading. Peter was clear—he sat alone. She drew her chair a little nearer to him; hitherto, she had been afraid.

Suddenly this terror had lifted, vanished, rolled away into mist. She wasn't afraid of Peter—or for him. She didn't do him the injury of imagining him some grand and secret sinner. Again she laughed.

"I'm very happy," she said, her voice like a reed, "and tomorrow is Sunday, a good day. We will go to church together and we will call on Daniel Large."

Peter nodded. He was looking quite sleepy—and superbly happy.

"I won't work any more tonight," he said. "I shouldn't do any good if I did. But I will go back for a little—to tear up what I have done."

Aunt Ann Grimes had risen with alacrity at the first hint of breaking up. She was half-asleep, but remained too polite to make the first move for the upper floor and sleep.

"Tear up what you've done!" she cried, looking at him keenly. "What's the good o' thet?"

"It is the way of a poet; and the name of a poet is not Peter, but Penelope," said Christine, laughing again.

She was ever so happy; it had all been fancy; Peter was free. His was a broad, clean, steady shoulder; nothing sat on it, he did not jerk it one bit. Nothing ever had sat on it—or would again.

"It's time I took ter specs," said Aunt Ann Grimes, poking out what was left of the fire and looking at the bolts of the shutters and making all sure for the night. "I could ha' swore you'd bin leanin' agen whitewash."

She stared at Peter's shoulder in a puzzled way as she bade him good night.

He was standing in the middle of the room, looking vague, undecided; leaning a little toward Christine and yet seeming to shrink from her.

"I'll just tear up what I've done," he said, as they went into the big room. "It won't take long."

"But, Peter dear, you were so pleased with it just now."

"Was I? But Pryor wouldn't be."

"Never mind Pryor. Wait until the morning and read it to me."

"My darling, I wouldn't read it to you for worlds. Let me go in there, just a minute."

"Peter! You are droll. What is a poet—a child, a bird, God's fool?"

"The devil's willing victim often enough, dear heart. I won't keep you waiting long. Has Aunt Ann Grimes gone?"

"Yes."

"And Arethusa Miller?"

"Long ago."

"I'm rather looking for the morning," said Peter, frowning. "I want to find out what that girl really is like; she looked most astounding when I came out of this room just now."

He turned the handle of the study door and went in. Christine stood on the threshold. He took the sheets of manuscript from the table, carefully picked up one that had dropped to the floor. He tore it all up precisely and carried it to the waste-paper basket and then changed his mind and threw it on the fire.

Christine watched him. When the paper made little flames, she was vaguely and unreasonably afraid, for fear that the—Third—would come back. Sometimes to herself she called it the Third, or the Shoulder-Knot. In moments of definite ugly terror she called it the Devil—these moments when she fancied that it grew, took real shape. She was so afraid of it—in terror lest it should become a definite, menacing creature—to speak, to move, to get off Peter's shoulder, perhaps. For the present, when it came, it was merely a little whirling mist; it played tricks of shape, as fog and steam will, but it remained nothing for long. It played tricks of shape—and color. Sometimes she saw it scarlet and sometimes green—or it was purple? She was afraid of it and of herself—and, most, of Peter. He was possessed, poor Peter. She did not know what the end would be for any of them. Already the Thing had wriggled itself into a fearful position of recognition; it made the vague third of a family.

And the heaviest part of her burden was that Peter did not know, that she could not unburden to him—or to anyone else; except, perhaps, Pryor. Since Peter had said, "I used to catch Pryor looking at me hard as if he felt afraid," there had been blessed hope in Pryor. And if ever her world reeled round her then she would send for Ralph Pryor—to hold it steady.

But it was all nothing—nothing. This thing was simply bred of her own

fancy; it played bo-peep with her. It came so suddenly, it went in a flash—it was a morbid trick of vision; nothing, nothing else.

She looked yearningly at Peter. She crossed the threshold and breathed a scholar's air at once. She would like to touch him, to feel sure, to put her head down on his shoulder and so defy the fanciful horror that was sapping at her married joy.

Peter was on his knees, digging in all the little bits of paper with the poker. Once he picked up a scrap and read the words on it and stuck it safe within the bars with his fingers.

"One would think you were guilty and burning a will," said Christine.

"Dearest! Don't come in and don't talk of guilt. I can't bear an ugly word on your perfect lip. Christine—there! It is all burnt; all good gray ash." He stood up. "I shall do wonderful work in this place; good work, pure work that will lift the world. That, after all, is the poet's mission. He is an evangelist; he comes down with the apostles—and if he falls away, his name is Judas."

"Dear! Come out, close, and talk to me." She came as far as the big table. The litter of papers and books was between them. "Tonight you are a person of so many names. I called you Penelope and you dub yourself Judas—a possible Judas—and you are only just Peter, all the time."

He came out, drew her with him, locked the door and put his arm round her shoulder. He looked imperturbably happy and tired to death.

"I am just Peter—a beautiful name. Why did they give it me? I'm not worth it. Peter! Judas! Penelope! We can't get away from mythology and the Bible."

They went together up the easy, broad stair. From the beach came the long, rhythmic swish of salt waves. Round the stout house—round and round—ran the appealing wind.

At the turn of the landing Christine stopped; she wavered a moment, looking closely first, and then put her head on Peter's clean shoulder, a perfectly

steady shoulder—and a rock of refuge. What a fool she had been!

"Peter," she said a little hysterically, "we are going to be happy here for years and years, for all our long lives."

"For ever after, pet. That is the way of the fairy-books; and fairies are my religion."

"Nothing shall ever change or come between us."

"What should?" asked Peter peacefully. "Hold the candle straight, Christine, or you will splash grease on the polished stair and break the stout heart of Aunt Ann Grimes. Isn't beeswax a virtuous smell? And your kinswoman is an exquisitely original creature. Next week I am going out into the kitchen and the bakehouse and the dairy—all the big, hospitable places—and watch her at work."

IV

RALPH PRYOR thought that he had never seen a more captivating woman; he had seen women as beautiful—but they left you cold, uncaring. This one fired your interest at once. She was beautiful, but—much more—she was tragic. Something had put a finger on her, traced her face. So this was Peter's wife! He had always loved Peter and been proud of him and believed in him—and trembled for him. His main emotion at this moment, however, as the train came in at the little station of the loop line and as he got out, was one of eager speculation. Why had Peter's wife sent post-haste for him?

"I knew you would come," she said simply.

He cherished her voice; it was rich, kin with her beauty. She was a being of lavish color; he liked that about brunettes, they never stinted. He felt instantly, as Peter had felt, that she did not rightly belong to this sleek island-country of brown semi-blondes, nor did she belong to this clever and cocksure century. She carried about with her an evasive fragrance of times forever past—a very strange and piquant

young woman. He was glad that he came at once; the line of her chin and throat was worth traveling a hundred miles to see, was worth leaving London in the very middle of the season. He was glad he came—for his own sake. Yet what man could have helped coming—for hers—in face of her pathetic and singular summons? He had her letter yet in his pocket; it was the missive of a desperate woman.

The railway station was very small and bright. It was perched near the sea, and salt and swish and the hearty voices of seafaring men seemed to run along the lines. The band round the station-master's hat, the green paint on the engine, the flower borders under the twinkling windows of the booking-office all looked so trim and miniature that the place was like a box of German toys. Ralph Pryor wanted to take up the train and play with it. He reflected that one need not go to the Continent for novelty. The Continent was wretchedly cosmopolitan—every country was like all the other countries. If you wanted something absolutely new, you must go to the overlooked corners of little green England.

They drove away, he and Peter's wife, in the usual little country chaise, with the usual country pony, Ralph Pryor sleepily watching the flies on the creature's sandy, fat flanks, as Christine drove him. He was thinking that Peter's wife, save for her tragic beauty, save for a deft hint of incomparable coquetry, might have been the average parson's daughter; yet you couldn't imagine her giving away tracts engagingly entitled "Why Be a Drunkard?" or playing the harmonium in the parish-room, or riding in a brake at the annual treat.

They drove along a deserted road, a very lovely road of broad simplicities. An occasional peasant merely merged into the abiding harmony of things; the cry of sheep and the low of cattle made a folk-song. The air was ringing and trembling, thrilling and thrumming with petulant, newly-dropped lambs. He caught the charm of a pastoral country. She had beckoned him down

into an enchanted spot, this wife of Peter's.

The sea lay far beneath. It was the bluest sea in the world—such a blue bosom, with a breastplate of amber and of topaz as the sun glanced into it and waked up passion.

"This is a very beautiful spot," he said in his best complimentary manner.

It was an inept remark, as he very well knew—but you have to struggle through ineptitudes to reach confidence. Lifelong loves have been built up on the slender structure of the weather or the scenery.

"Everyone says so," returned Christine absently.

"I apologize—for saying things with everyone else."

She turned to him, smiling; when she smiled, she was very young; irrepressible girlishness sprang out.

"It doesn't matter—save that I had high expectations of you, Mr. Pryor. I am strung up for difference in you."

"You give me a difficult part to play."

"Difficult!" her smile faded at once.

"You are to be a tragedian. We have hardly met, and yet I cannot waste a moment on polite vaporings. I can't ask you if the journey was trying or my letter a surprise or—anything. For many months your very name has been a salve to me; it has been all I had. I cannot make you understand—yet; I cannot hope to, until you have seen Peter. I have dropped your name into the throat of the storm; I have dragged it out and hugged it to me. I have laughed over it—and moaned. Don't think me mad, although it is wonderful that I am not. All the wild Winter I have had no one but you. I have made you my patron saint."

She laughed. What a beautiful girl, what a joyous, most mysterious girl, and how bitterly stricken! What had Peter been doing to her? Ralph Pryor had always been doubtful of Peter.

The pony was walking up the hill, and she let the reins sag.

"This is a very beautiful place in Summertime," she admitted. "I won't be rude, I will be conventional,

too, if you like. But—no, I can't be polite. In Winter, this country is so wild and terrifying. I have lived here all my life, and while I was happy I loved the wild weather; drank it, dipped into it—don't you know?"

"Yes," he said briefly and with a nod of perfect understanding. "I know. London has nearly strangled that feeling in me, yet—I know."

"But now that I am wretched, I feel afraid," said Christine.

"You are not happy?"

She looked at him queerly.

"Happy! Did I send you the letter of a happy woman? I am most miserable—with a misery that evades me, laughs at me. I have sent for you—to explain."

"Oh!" said Pryor, and stared down at the sea and round at the hills; they stood close, the hills, and tried to listen. "I hope your patron saint won't fail you."

"Don't fail me, please; saints don't. You are all—the last and only—that I have. All through the Winter—a long, haunted Winter—I have barely kept my wits. I have held them together with both hands. And I went for comfort and solution to the hills and to the sea—they just denied me."

"Nature is very blasé; she is old and wise—utterly sick of human emotions," said Ralph Pryor. "No wonder she turned a shoulder to all your woes."

"A shoulder! Doesn't that word mean anything particular to you? Doesn't it suggest—Peter? Don't answer hastily; do stop to think. Don't tell me that—that my saint is going to fail me."

Christine let the reins go altogether and put out her hands pitifully. Ralph Pryor took them. She was very young, and he was past fifty. And she was beautiful and in some subtle, big distress, the poor child. He had such a heart for charm that he already felt he could have died for her, this wonderful wife of Peter's.

She had begged him to think, and he thought. Uncomfortable memories twitched him.

Peter! So there had been something

in it, after all, and he, Ralph Pryor, need not have gone headlong to a famous oculist with a garbled tale of approaching blindness or madness or both. The mischief had been with Peter, not with him.

"Your saint won't fail you," he said gently. "Have you ever seen anything on the poor chap's shoulder?"

Christine began to cry; she sighted refuge. She cried, not covering her face or making a single sound, but sitting bolt upright, with the round tears running their own way, making zig-zag channels down her face. Ralph Pryor was more interested and admiring than before. Her perfect beauty would stand the supreme test of unchecked weeping. Her hands fluttered in his; he felt he held a bird—and softly dropped them.

"Forgive me," she said, "forgive me. I am so glad. I really cannot help it. Listen! We have six miles yet to drive and the sun is hot and the pony old. We will go very slowly and you shall tell me just what you have seen in the past and I will tell you all I am suffering in the present. And then we shall be sworn allies before you meet Peter."

She whisked away the twinkling tears and smiled at him.

"First," he asked, "does Peter know I'm coming?"

"Yes, I told him I had written; that I was most anxious to meet you. When we were on our honeymoon and passed through London and might have seen you——"

"I was in Barbary," Pryor nodded. "Peter wrote to me afterward."

"Did he say anything about me in the letter? How much do you know? We must clear the ground before we begin to talk seriously."

Christine looked very happy now. Ralph Pryor had seen, too, and he would explain. He held the grim secret of the shoulder.

"I know everything there is to know. He spoke of your first meeting and described the house and waxed enthusiastic about your Aunt Ann Grimes. And he had found a beautiful primitive

man, Daniel Large by name. And he lived on cream and was going to do work of dazzling, eternal purity. He made a glowing romance of the whole thing, a ballade. That is Peter's charming way with words."

"Poor Peter! He was happy then," she said, sighing.

"Isn't he happy now? Isn't he working?"

"Always working. When I told him you were coming he seemed annoyed—because you might interfere with his work."

"Umph! Tell me just what he said. It may help."

"He said, 'I am going to move the world, but Pryor wouldn't approve of what I am doing; Pryor is one of those infernal conservatives—he ties people's hearts round with a bit of string and neatly labels them. I'm going to tear off all the strings and labels, I'm going to let hearts go loose—for the first time in the history of the civilized world.'"

Pryor nodded. "I know, I know; he has talked like that before. And he has done the most infamous work, which I've taken from him, by craft or positive force, and burned. If I hadn't he would have been fit to cut his throat when the mood was off him, when the—*the Thing*—was gone."

"The—*Thing*! You have seen it?"

They looked at each other oddly before he answered. The shivering vagueness of the accursed mystery possessed them, made them helpless and dreadfully afraid.

"Yes, I've seen it, and it would be a great deal better for you," said Pryor bluntly, "if Peter beat you, or if he got drunk or gambled or—anything. You can fight difficulties like that; you know just where you are."

"Exactly," Christine assented. "But he doesn't do—anything. Tell me just what you have seen, please; I love him so. Mr. Pryor, we are in a mood of utter frankness. Have you ever been in love? If so, you'll know, in some measure, what I have suffered in the last twelve months."

The great critic flinched beneath the candid query of this girl's lovely eyes.

You couldn't tell a lie to them, you couldn't put them aside with a gruff "Pshaw," in a glance, as it were. He must tell the truth. He was gray and elderly-looking and pompous and spectacted—a personage in his way, and petted to death by the world, his figure had slipped out of bounds with his total of years. Yet a mere bit of a country girl was dragging the truth out of him; a beautiful creature, with a Greek profile and a flick of rusticity in her drawling South-country speech. He looked quite boyish and gawky as he answered:

"Yes, I was in love, and she—she didn't belong to me. You understand? Another man had been first. That is the worst sort of love trouble, because it is so hopeless. It is worse even than death. When people are dead you can forget."

"She was married to someone else—I understand, and I am very sorry. But your suffering will be my service, Mr. Pryor, because now I feel sure that you will do everything you can. There is no one else to help me."

"Your aunt—what is her attitude?"

"Dear Aunt Ann Grimes! When you see her you won't need to ask questions. Yet she has seen something also, although she will not dwell on it."

"Tell me all about her; tell me more than Peter told."

"She is always bemoaning Peter's untidy trick of getting white smears on his shoulder; she follows him about with a clothes-brush, and then—then there is nothing there."

"What does she make of that?"

"She is puzzled for a minute and then puts the matter out of her mind; takes violently to baking or butter-making, scolds Arethusa Miller, the maid. My aunt is an economist—of the emotions. She is also very religious, in a chapel way, and having started out on the comfortable hypothesis that Peter is a poet—therefore a madman and possibly damned—she sees no use in wasting affection on a being with whom you have nothing in common in this world and against

whom you will not rub shoulders in the next," she explained concisely.

"I see. And now tell me exactly just what sits—to you—on Peter's shoulder," said Pryor soberly. "That there is something I am now certain. One can no longer pretend that it is a bogey, a trick of vision—one of those ghostly, vague things that are merely material in their inception—liver or the optic nerve."

Christine shrugged.

"I know, I've been through all that. But of course there is something, and the people who are fondest of Peter see it clearest. Even those who take a passing interest in him suspect. Only yesterday Arethusa's round eyes were fixed on his shoulder, and last week, in the hay-field, Daniel Large brushed off what he believed to be a wasp."

"A wasp! And you? What do you believe?"

"I," she drew up closer to him, although the sun was warm and sane, although the world was empty save for ringing sheep and sweet-smelling kine, "believe it to be a devil. It has grown since our marriage, become more definite, more constant. It—it makes one of the family; it gets between caresses, and I am so afraid."

She was shivering. Pryor looked at her somberly; this was an odd affair, indeed. Were they living in modern times or had they slid back to medievalism—to the days of a pitchfork devil and of witches on broomhandles? Had we learned anything of the centuries or was our boasted knowledge all bombast, and did obscure and terrifying forces remain?

"And yet it isn't one of the family," continued Christine, whipping the pony. "It is too fugitive for that. It is a next-door neighbor—bobs in and out, off and on, as it likes. It has all the freedom of a next-door neighbor; plagues you, persists, won't be kept outside. You hate it and endure it and dissemble. Yes," she nodded and thoughtfully curled the whip, "it is a next-door neighbor. I never had one, but I know the manners of the type. Through living with the hills and the

sea, who are wise—and heartless—I can understand all sorts of things and people by instinct."

"The very best form of knowledge; but go on about Peter."

"Peter! He does not seem to know, therefore I dare not speak of it, cannot even drop a hint. Sometimes he joggles his shoulder and as he does so the shadow dances up and down."

"Yes, yes; poor, dear fellow, haven't I seen him joggle his shoulder like that a hundred times?"

"And you saw—It?"

"I never saw anything definite—I saw a mist, a miniature thunder-cloud, with a vague shape sitting in it. I could never feel sure, never put my finger on it, as it were."

"You were not fond enough of him—that is why. It was vague to me at first; then it became certain, brought a coldness each time; then it wouldn't be refused any longer. As love strengthens, so it grows—it feeds at love. We are at its mercy, Peter and I; at the mercy of a merry, bob-about devil. You have no idea how cheerful it is."

She looked at him gravely. "You think me mad, of course?"

"No, not mad. I think you are—at its mercy."

"It is so terrible, so jocular. I dread to go near Peter when they are together. And, at those times, he doesn't want me. He says I get in the way of his work, and yet he comes up very close to me, looking piteous, and staring hard as if he were trying to learn my face by heart."

"Does he say anything?"

"Yes, always the same thing. 'You haven't changed, Christine. I'm glad you haven't changed with the rest of the world. And yet, if you did, it might help my work—it might be the one perfect completing touch.'"

"It is the most uncanny affair. Doesn't he suspect anything himself?"

"I don't know. When his shoulder is clear, he is himself—he is just Peter. He comes and sits out on the veranda and looks so happy and laughs and says, 'How green and sane the landscape is,' or, 'Your Aunt Ann Grimes

looks just as she did the first day I saw her.' He seems to be amazed and delighted—at a green world, at an everyday Aunt Ann Grimes."

"How does he feel about his work at those times?"

"He hates it, burns it; begins all over, clean, as he says."

"Poor fellow! These geniuses pay a high commission."

"Peter is possessed, Mr. Pryor."

Pryor nodded.

"I'm afraid we must have recourse to that solution—in the twentieth century. By Jove! it makes the scientists look a precious pack of fools, doesn't it? And they can't help you—any more than I can."

"But you must and will," she said earnestly. "It is your business and mine to exorcise the spirit. And you—you know."

"What do I know? I wish to goodness I did."

"You know his past, and that is why I sent for you. It occurs to me that he is haunted by a Sin."

"A sin?"

Christine nodded.

"I've had plenty of time to think things out, and the wild Winter world has helped me—that much. A Sin—dead, or living, or unexpiated. I don't know; I hoped you might be able to tell me."

"But Peter," said Pryor, his eyes staring and snapping, "so long as I have known him, which is before he bought his first razor, has been an irreproachable young man; it sounds drab, dreadful, doesn't it?—but I can't acquit him. I don't say his mind hasn't run riot, now and then. You may docket definite sins, tie them in a neat legal bundle. There is drink—he never drank. Betting? He only loves a race for the macaw-like color of the flashing jockeys. There remain theft, murder, forgery, cunning—and a few more minor ones. There is also—" He broke off and looked hard at Christine and then away at the bejeweled sea.

Her bright eyes—gray, black or green, which?—met his without fear.

"I know—a Woman."

"Exactly—and she is the common root of the lot."

"Yet I would give Peter to her—if she could cure him."

"Nonsense! I don't believe she exists—for Peter," said Pryor stoutly.

"I had to put her in the legal packet—that is all."

They drove on; Christine was consumed by half-defined jealousies. She wanted to dip her hand into the past and drag out the Sin which enslaved Peter.

"You won't leave me," she said suddenly. "We don't know what is just in front of us. Things can't go on as they are."

"Things never do. We whirl, with the world. A turn of the wheel may mean death for Peter; death or madness—both. You can't say where these occult affairs will lead you."

"Exactly—and murder, suicide; all atop of each other?" She nodded, reeling off these horrible words in a patter. "That is why I sent for you; I felt sure that solution—of some sort—was in the air. You won't leave me. I'm so afraid—of the end."

Again Pryor took her hands—and the reins slipped down on the pony's sleek back. He took them in a fatherly way, yet with a delightful leaven. She was so young and so enchantingly lovely and so subtly grief-stricken, this rare feminine find of poor Peter's. And he, elderly, fat and famous Ralph Pryor, could have lavished such hoards of affection on a woman had Fate only been kind.

"I won't leave you until the thing is settled and done with," he promised; "until we have throttled the Sin or laid it to rest with Peter. That is what it comes to, remember; we must face that. Things can't go on; they never do."

Yes, he would certainly stay and see the end; sentiment, piquant interest, common humanity, demanded that. He mentally handed over to perdition what was left of the London season.

V

PETER came out in the veranda and found Ralph Pryor on the bench. Pryor had been ten days at the farm, waiting for developments. The superb charm of the simple old earth was in his blood; he thought of London as a distant and contemptible puppet show.

Peter came out, looking odd enough. The Sin on his shoulder was something more than himself; emotionally, he staggered under it; physically, it warped him. It dwarfed and twisted him; he looked a mere grotesque and abject mannikin. He appeared pale and brown; wild, dazed and staring—yet gorgeously triumphant. His wide smile had in it most threatening tokens.

"I've done it," he said, feeling a way to the bench.

"Done what?"

"My work, of course, you old fool; the thing that is going to rock this world to its respectable roots, take the scales from its eyes, and its heart off the chain. Forgive my rather mixed metaphor, simile, paradox, imagery—what do I mean?"

"It would be difficult to say." Pryor looked at him hard.

His head dropped, his hands hung. Presently he gave a shake and a sigh and met the eyes of his friend; and as he did this—it was the wierdest, most uncomfortable affair that Pryor had ever been mixed up with—so the shadow, the shape, the definite, menacing evil on his shoulder went. It went in a wink—like a lantern-slide. Peter sat bolt up, he smiled and looked out at the patient rain, which fell from a sky of gauze to a thirsty earth.

"What a warble it makes," he said. "Everything the world does at this time of the year is a song—of innocence."

"And you would change all that?"

"Not I. What does the fellow mean?" He put a hand affectionately on Pryor's knee. "The poet's mission is first and foremost to be pure; he must feed his muse on bread and milk."

"How about your muse? Done

anything worth while since I've been here? You won't let me read it; I'm not allowed to set foot across your study threshold."

Peter grew solemn.

"You mustn't go in there—not yet," he said. "And as for the work, it's no good. I'll tear it up, burn it—safe. I wouldn't let you see it for a king's ransom. By George, Pryor, isn't the sea exquisite—in her veil, today! She looks a nun, waiting for spiritual nuptials. And the world—how white it is, virginal." He looked round him, with a grateful gulp, with a moist eye.

The landscape struck a white note, a wet note—it was colorless, warbling, pensive. Syringa was scattered on the little grass-patch and tossed up, as it lay in the rain, a pale scent. In the field just beyond the garden fence stood stately companies of wild parsley.

"Look!" said Peter, pointing, "they are holding court, those chaps; it is a levee, in a grass-green salon."

Whichever way you turned, on that wet June day, the world was white, or was a gauzy, widowed gray, or a green that seemed cold for lack of sun. Daisies were thick growing and flat like lime all over the land that sloped to the sea.

"The very cat is white," said Peter; "at least, her whiskers are; and when she is in a certain mood, her whiskers are the most—and the all—of her. I saw this cat the very first day I came to the farm and she struck me as uncanny even then. I decided to make a religion of her, found a little brand-new, piping-hot sect. I would have drawn it out of the oven of my brain—as a baker draws buns, and called my toothsome wares in Bond street."

He fondled the creature, let it jump on his knee; he looked at it, in a fixed and puzzled way. Every time he touched it he seemed amazed, uncertain.

"It's just a cat," he said simply, at last, "and yet, don't think me drunk or mad, I've seen this animal take on the strangest shapes—terrific, illuminating. She—she's helped my work many a time. I tell you, Pryor,

they've got that farm-yard full of monstrosities, and yet I like them. They help my work and—no, they damn it. Get off, you brute!"

He was jerking his shoulder. Pryor was afraid.

"This place is bewitched," continued Peter, frowning. "Have you seen the old woman, and the girl and the big man who sows the seeds? There is another man who calls the cattle home at the very birth hour of day. He wakes me every morning."

A mist was on his shoulder, whirling, spinning, taking shape.

"I want to see Christine," he said. "Where is Christine? I—I suppose she is just the same as usual."

"Of course she is." Pryor stood up. "Look here, Peter, I must be alone with you this morning, bachelor. See? And we are going into your study for a smoke."

He led the way. To his amazement, Peter docilely followed, jerking his poor shoulder, and looking over it.

They went in. The room was wild, most disorderly. Peter's refusal to have it cleaned had long ago wrung the heart of Aunt Ann Grimes—and wrung it afresh once every week, when the accustomed day for cleaning came round.

The waste-paper basket, the grate and every corner stood piled with paper torn very small. On the table was a stack of manuscript. Peter threw his handkerchief over it and laughed.

He said: "Sit down, now you are here. The tobacco is in a jar. The matches are—somewhere. I haven't smoked for a long time."

"Is there anything to drink?" Pryor looked keenly about him.

"No. I drink—buttermilk." Peter laughed again—and again his shoulder was clear. Christine had been very right in calling it a merry, bob-about devil. Poor Christine! Pryor made up his mind to probe to the very root of things before he left this room.

"You don't drink, you don't swear, you don't—anything," he said. "Yet we've all got a little personal monster somewhere; we kick it or fondle it; we

slay it, or feed it. Where do you keep yours, and what is your course of treatment?"

There was wonderful silence—one of those little pregnant pauses life affords. They are dotted along the total of everyone; they make scars, and they pain us, or we are proud of them.

"I've got a sin," Peter said, quite soberly. "I keep it all to myself; I take it out and play with it when I am alone."

"Be serious."

"I am. When I am most serious on a subject I play about first. You ought to know me well enough for that. I'm going to tell you."

"Thank God for that! Go on."

"I will, as quickly as I can. If I am not quick, I may be stopped. My mood will change. I shall be in a fury to work. I shall see things which no man has ever before seen and which must, for the sake of posterity, be set down at once. I shall drive you out of the room—or go stark mad if you refuse to go."

"I should certainly refuse. Don't play about too long, Peter."

"I won't, old chap; you are very good to me. I'm so glad you came."

He settled back in the chair, turning away from the open window, refusing to look at the wall, keeping his eye full on Pryor—who remarked, in a cheerful, matter-of-fact fashion:

"Come along. Out with it."

"I don't see that it concerns you, after all," said the other, turning suddenly, unaccountably sullen.

"Perhaps not. But there is—Christine. Don't you know that you are killing that poor girl?—by suspense, by mystery, by everything that is opposed to common sense and innocence."

"I wouldn't hurt Christine for worlds; she—saves me. I wouldn't vex or wound her, bless her darling heart, unless she got in the way of my work. And you ought to know what a man's work is."

"I know what yours is—your sin, in some subtle way. Be plain, Peter; be brief and definite."

Peter had his hand on the handkerchief. He was curling up a corner, feeling the manuscript underneath. Pryor took it away.

"You've done a lot," he said, feeling, too, weighing it up in poetic phrases—the critic in him stronger than the friend.

"A devil of a lot. Take the cursed thing out of sight and let me tell you everything—while I can. Sit down—and keep still. I want to tell, but there isn't anything—that you'll believe. I've always blamed your sanity; but for your damnable common sense I should have come to you years ago and unbosomed—most certainly before I married. Mine is a mere sin of the senses. It hasn't any name. You couldn't put me in a court of justice for it, you couldn't shut your door on me; not any door—unless it was a madhouse. It is a sin—of sight. There—that's out; that's all. Not a very dramatic admission, you'll say, tuned as you have been, no doubt, for a mere vulgar sin with a Saxon name to it, a thing of blood and bones."

Peter was looking quite sane, quite clear, very much relieved; the outline of his shoulder was sharp and all the mist that Pryor saw was through the lattice—June, most magic and withdrawn, the mountains softly weeping.

"A sin—of sight," he said. "What?"

Peter shrugged.

"You ought to know, as a man of the world, that one can sin as definitely through the eyes as through the ears, and I—I did. There isn't anything more to tell. That's all. I apologize for cheating you of a definite dramatic disclosure; yet the elusive things are always the most truly horrible."

"You sinned through the eyes?"

"I did—and you won't help me out by detached monosyllables, my dear old fellow."

"What else can I say? You haven't told me anything."

"No—not anything. And yet I have suffered—all. Can't you see? I went about the world—sinning. I looked

for the ugly—and found it. I saw all there was to see; and the world is pretty clever at—at showing. And it became an obsession with me—that sin of sight, until in the end I could see nothing—clean. And it tinged my work and took my very soul in its claws. And I wanted to write down everything I saw, and everything I imagined I saw; give it to the world—make everybody see, too. And it became more than an obsession, it became a monster, a familiar, a thing that was there, although I could not see it. Yet sometimes I feel a flutter on my shoulder and twist my head, but there is—nothing.”

“Nothing to you—but other people see,” said Pryor, after a weighty pause, during which he was asking himself, “Shall I tell him—shall I?”

Peter stared, a great joy leaped out of him; joy and a glad, stunned surprise.

“Then it *is* real? I’m not alone with it? What a blessing! That links me up with other people. Does everybody see—does Christine?”

“Of course she does.”

“Anybody else? Hurry up.”

“Well, years ago I saw, or thought I saw—something. And I linked it up vaguely in my mind with the moral speck in your work of which I was always complaining. You might go far if you’d only be—shall we say respectable? That is the fault of unbridled genius; it wants to leap over all the hurdles. I could name one or more Frenchmen who have done this—and ruined themselves as permanent artists, but you are the first English poet with that particular twist.”

“Anybody else? I’d like all the world to see, then I shouldn’t feel so horribly alone with it.”

“Aunt Ann Grimes, for another,” said Pryor.

Peter nodded complacently.

“Yes, I’ve noticed that; and the round-eyed girl, Arethusa Miller—you should see her eyes sometimes, and the ghastly line of her pale lips—she looks at me oddly. And Daniel Large and Walter Shuttle—yes. And when I

was in Italy on my honeymoon a beggar woman stared hard and then crossed herself. She was a woman I saw every morning on the steps of a church, and I’d been kind to her in a way. But after that morning she avoided me. What does Christine see? Tell me that. Nobody else matters very much.”

“She sees nothing that can be formulated; it is all equally vague—the sin, the shape.”

“Vague! It has been real enough—the vague sins are,” groaned Peter. “It is horrible to be in the grip of an uncatchable subtlety like this. The world I’ve lived in, the things I’ve seen! Vision has been chameleon—and not only color, but shape. Just try to realize for yourself. My eyes have been a quick-turn artist. Do you understand? I never knew what was coming next or how long it would last. Haunted murderers and incorrigible drunkards are a fool to it. At least, they know in some measure what they are going to see—and it has some semblance of reality. Those are the stock shapes for these sins—accredited bogus. The one calm, unchanging sight for me has been Christine—and yet I never knew from one moment to the other that she would not become twisted, colored, anything that was abnormal.

“Every ugliness I ever looked on—of dead art or living vice—has become emphasized, mingled, made raving mad. If Christine altered, I should go straight down there”—he flung himself round in the chair and looked at the sea—and waded in and let the water close—over. I should shut my eyes. When my eyes are shut sight is quite clean. I wish I could keep them always shut. How the sea beckons! Today it is a round bosom—in smoke-gray gauze. When the sun shines every wave is a blue-eyed girl—looking love at you, dancing before you, as the daughter of Herodias danced. If Christine changed, I should go mad. And yet,” he stared at his shrouded manuscript, “it might mean that I should then produce a masterpiece, be

the most incomparable genius the world has ever known, barring Shakespeare. Pryor, I would even enter the lists with him."

"Don't talk nonsense. Shakespeare saw—clean. We've got to be sane for the sake of your wife."

"I'd do anything for Christine, almost," said Peter, sitting very still, with the air of a docile child—yet lifting his shoulder once or twice and rubbing his chin on it.

"If you would do anything for Christine, keep quiet and listen to me. I want to help you both."

"All right. Fire away. God knows I want to be helped. And yet, to be shorn of a great gift—you are making a modern Samson of me, or proposing to. And it is a wonderful privilege, after all—unique sight. You suffer with it, of course; all the big things bring suffering."

"Keep still, keep quiet—and listen."

"Very well, but I know perfectly what you are proposing to do—you've done it before. You will burn my masterpiece."

"Every word of it, and all the bits that lurk in corners and are scattered over the floor." Pryor swept an eye round the littered room. "And then you are going to promise me not to write a line for six months, at least."

He got up impetuously and swept the torn heaps together, gathering derelict scraps in his scooped palms, stooping and puffing a little and looking quite excited. He took wood out of a basket near and laid the fire, packed everything down tight and set a match to the lot.

"What a maw that grate's got!" said Peter, watching. "Lucky for you—and a loss to the world! You are in a tremendous bustle, Pryor; I wouldn't have believed a fat fellow could move so fast. Ugh! When you put my manuscript on top, like that, it is a real pang to me, a physical severance. I suppose one feels like that when burning love-letters."

"Never burned any," said Pryor curtly, seizing the bellows.

Peter went to the lattice and leaned

out, stuck his head well into the open. The whole world was in an uplifted mood of great gratitude, as the rain fell on dry ground, on dusty leaves. There had been drought for weeks and the weather was so hot, even now, that nothing stirred.

"Not an eyelash moves," said Peter dreamily.

Everything you saw and heard and felt was happy. Ecstatic sounds came from pasture-land and farm-yard—and trembled down from high boughs. Now and again an extra large drop of rain came with a slow splat on a large leaf. Peter snuffed and stared and smiled.

"I see all the things that are beautiful," he said, "beautiful—and most respectable; the things that everyone sees—or ought to see. But four-fifths of the people are blind. I knew a woman once who went to Bruges, and when she was asked about the medieval buildings she stared and said that, so far as her experience went, there wasn't a single decent draper in the place; and as for Roman Catholic churches she never noticed them on principle. There goes Walter Shuttle with a sack across his back—and you may be certain he is thinking of nothing but the odds against lumbago. To my surprise and great joy he is just—Walter Shuttle, with a sack across his back. Pryor, I believe you are curing me already. I'm not afraid of things changing; the landscape remains; a little trite and overdone; too much written about and raved over by little tin poets—but green and—and respectable."

"That's done," said Pryor, struggling up and looking very hot and dealing final destruction with the poker. In the grate and fallen to the hearth was a feathery black heap—shrunken, sinister, showing white here and there.

Peter looked in. The room was very hot; it was all yellow and red, dance and splutter.

"I saw four shapes—you couldn't call them definite creatures—dancing a *pas de quatre* in that corner," he said, with a leer, with a finger that pointed

and bent. "I have certain things branded on my retina and no fire—earth-kindled, anyhow—can burn them out or over. Do you see?"

He advanced, in a threatening stride; he looked blankly at the grate.

"You haven't burned it all?"

"But I have," said Pryor unflinchingly, and watching. "Haven't left a single comma."

"The commas wouldn't hurt—or help," mumbled Peter stupidly.

He stared down; presently he knelt down. His face was very vacant; he seemed to wait—for inspiration, for the propitious turn of a mood. He was empty of resolve. And, while he was reaching out for his emotions there was a brisk tap at the door and the moment after Aunt Ann Grimes looked in.

"It's past dinner-time," she said, "an' Christine's come in from the beach, where she've bin a-walkin' in pourin' rain like daft Matildy Morrell did used ter do, an'——"

"Good heavens!" called out Peter, clasping his hands. "Did ever a woman wear such a face! Look, Pryor! Don't tell me you can't see it, too."

They were all looking, each pair of eyes transfixed at its particular horror. Peter stared at Aunt Ann Grimes, while she and Pryor stared at Peter. No, not at Peter; at Peter's shoulder—which had instantly become all of him.

Pryor's heart dropped—into unplumbed depths, so to speak. The burning hadn't been of the least use in the world; he might have known it wouldn't be. It was an experiment, yet the only one at hand. He stared at Peter. He saw—as Christine saw. He saw even more than she had done, and so did Aunt Ann Grimes. He felt certain that they saw more.

Peter was feeling in the grate—at warm ash, at dead, most devilish inspiration.

"You'd better leave me alone; you've got to leave me alone," he said, with an air of deadly quietness that would not be denied. "I shall be better alone and

—and so will you. Pryor, if you really are a friend, do leave me alone."

He was not to be withstood, the poor, eager, stricken, imprisoned fellow. They must leave him to himself, for the time being anyhow. Pryor, feeling that he was walking apart, took the arm of Aunt Ann Grimes with a certain stilted stage courtliness. They went out, shutting the door on Peter. He knelt by the grate; a doubled-up and fumbling Peter, his shoulder weighted down.

"But he bain't alone," whispered Aunt Ann Grimes, staring, shaking herself free of Pryor's hand.

"No—not alone. You—saw it! The most extraordinary affair!"

"I dunno as it's much out o' the common," said Aunt Ann Grimes; and Pryor for a moment could only stare at this astounding woman.

"Not out of the common!"

"Maybe you ain't religious, nor give ter Bible readin'?"

"Not exclusively—no."

"Maybe you've heerd o' the Gad-arene swine, an' maybe you ain't." She nodded at the fast-shut door. "Ef we b'leeve as the Bible's true, 'tain't fer us ter say as miracles be past, nor folks possessed by devils. He've done summat wrong, pore sinner, an' the token o' it be a-settin' theer. I see it on his shoulder as plain as plain."

She led the way to the living-room and the well-spread dinner-table. There was something in the long, simple swing of her limbs which reminded Pryor of a Jewish prophetess. Miriam might have walked like that, or Jael.

VI

THUNDER was clapping its hands all round the house.

"The lightning puts out tongues at us," said Christine childishly to Pryor and covering her eyes for a moment. "Where is Peter? I came down to see."

Pryor jumped up; he had been sitting deep in the study chair, his

thoughtful eyes on the feathery, blown-about heap of ash that had meant so much to Peter. It was dead art; the critic and the poet in Pryor were so strong, literature was such a real and powerful factor, that he felt he gazed on the ash of a burned body. Certainly there had been more pain and drama to the exit of this poor paper than there is to the exit of many a dull and sensible being.

"Peter! He left me an hour ago—three hours ago." He looked at his watch. "I thought he was in bed and asleep long ago. I've been—dreaming."

Pryor no longer stared down at the burned poems, but at Christine. The hearts of both began to kick and plunge; the eyes of both hinted at some terrific possibility. And the thunder kept on clapping, clapping round the house, and through the uncurtained lattice you might see the lightning go with a hop, skip and a jump from hill to hill.

"It is the worst storm we have had for years." Christine jerked up her hands again. "Good heavens, Mr. Pryor, where can Peter be? I thought he was with you."

"And I fully believed him to be with you. We must look all over the house."

"You don't think—?" she began, blanching, and pointing eloquently to the grate.

"I don't think anything. Come along."

They went, softly shod and whispering and peering, all over the house.

Every room had its rustling secret, as rooms have in the small hours—but not one had the secret of Peter.

"We mustn't wake your aunt," said Pryor as they mounted the stairs.

"She never wakes; she is one of those people who boast that they rarely close an eye," whispered Christine, with a queer little rueful smile. "As for Arethusa Miller—Listen! She is snoring."

They were close to the girl's door; in a passionate pause and gathering up

of the thunder they caught one long, contented snore.

"Come along," said Christine, beckoning and going down the short, crooked passage which led to her room and Peter's.

Lightning flickered over them, thunder came battering, came with a clash and a clamor.

"He can't possibly be out in this," said Pryor.

"He must be; we have looked everywhere. Wait a moment till I get a cloak."

She went into her empty bedroom and came out a minute or so later wrapped from head to heel. A hood was round her face. Pryor wondered why women did not always wear hoods; they were the very essence of conscious modesty, which is the secret of charm. He had his greatcoat on; in stealth, with thick hearts and hands that shook—not at the storm—they unbarred the house door and stood out.

It was a wonderful night, a savage night; a night all battle and despair and beauty—Summer set to tragedy.

"I felt certain there would be a storm," said Pryor. "It has been so hot all day. When I burned those poems of Peter's the little fire fairly flayed and shriveled me. Forgive me—for being trite. People always say the little things in the big moments, you know."

His mouth was close to the frill of her hood as they stood for a moment in the veranda, the sleeping house behind them, the furious world in front. Rain came down on the roof with the rattle of musketry.

"I wasn't listening," said Christine simply. "I was thinking of Peter. We must look in all the barns and places."

She stepped out, splashing into a cool puddle. The lightning almost made it molten, dangerous gold for a moment, then left it black.

They went paddling and staggering across the great farm-yard, rain, like a broom, sweeping them up behind; lightning making chaplets and girdles and anklets for Christine. Pryor

wished that he, like Peter, had been a speaking poet, instead of being what he was, just a critic. He thought of dozens of things, but could not say them; had he been able he would have written up this scene. It was weird enough; he felt it so in every fiber of him; but no words came to him whereby to express his feelings. He could think this all out, with delicate analysis, and yet be in a perfect fever over Peter. Once he looked behind him at the sea and thought of the poor fellow's words only that very morning: "I should wade in and let the water close in—over."

He had said he would do that if Christine changed. But she hadn't—or had she?

Pryor followed her; she knew every step of the way, for it was home earth.

She swung back a mighty door and beckoned him and went in and hestepped close on her eager heels. They needed no lantern. The lightning provided, at its own whim and fancy, illumination for a festal scene. They stood in darkness, wrapped in the swish and gurgle of rain for a moment, and then, for another, blinded by the startling fidelity of sight. It seemed that—while they could see at all—they saw everything—more. Not one delicate cobweb swinging from a rafter evaded them.

In this way they made their progress, the lightning keeping them in fitful glory, the thunder beating time. Thunder would provide trumpets—for triumph, if they found Peter; and drums—for a dirge if they didn't.

They went on, from one burly building to another. The unspoken secrets of the solitary rooms in the warm house had been eloquent enough, but the secrets of rude outer buildings, sacred to animals, to roots and grain and fierce implements, were even more suggestive. Pryor's elegant town blood began to thin. It was all so strange, so big, so primitive—the muffled stamp and champ and blow of stabled animals, the smell of milk, of hay, of compost.

"Peter loved these outer places," said Christine, when they stood in the

very last. "He said they helped his work."

"I don't wonder that he loved them—and was perhaps afraid. Is this the last corner we can look in? Have we been everywhere?"

She nodded; he saw that, in this keen moment, she could barely speak.

"I made sure we should find him," she said, after a pause, as he followed her into the air and closed the door behind them both.

"What can we do? What has he done?"

"We must go on looking—at least I will. You'd better go back—to bed."

"To bed!" Christine laughed, and her laugh had a wild sound, which matched the lawless night most beautifully.

"We will go down to the beach," she continued. "He loves the sea."

They crossed—the yard again and opened the garden gate and went out over sodden pasture-land. The rain lay in rills and channels; it was silver and gold and winking jewels. The lightning made of the whole world one vast rich mine. How full the world was of sound—of passion! And the pauses that came between were sepulchral. Compared with thunder, when it came, the long, sleepy boom of the sea was almost silence—was just playing at making a noise.

"You'd better take my arm," said Pryor. "The ground is bumpy."

In some stunned way they went toward the sea.

They reached the beach. The tide was a long way out and the broad strip of sand was jutted here and there by some evil snag of rock, was strewn with seaweed. In storm-lightened moments Pryor saw the seaweed as plainly as on the barns and buildings he had seen fine cobwebs or seen rusty nails driven deep into a beam.

Some of it was pipe-like and thick, some of it spread like a hand, some of it lay in floss like disordered masses, like a blonde's hair. He was thankful to God that, so far, he could see nothing but seaweed and malicious snags of rock.

They went along the beach, he and Christine. They ascended to the hills. One hour struck on the heels of another—the distracted night was on the wane. The storm growled itself to sleep. Little by little the thunder dropped a note, flash by flash the lightning grew more languid. Light died by degrees—as it does in bright eyes.

The skies no longer wept—they lifted. And as Pryor and Christine searched dumbly in the great primeval hills for Peter they watched the dawn come stepping from the east. She came languidly, came shamefaced and pale. There was never a rose streamer in the whimpering sky; everything was quiet, amazed, wonder-struck. The new day looked as a baby looks, its round eyes, its little mouth wide open.

It was quite day. The storm swept up its skirts and fled, with a last virago challenge; the sleepy old giant of a sun looked over the hills. He was sick to utter weariness of looking. The hills had been there so long and all the days and all the dawns were pretty much alike to him.

"Where can Peter be?" wailed Christine.

She turned her ghost-white face to Pryor's. They were both of them battle-worn, but the daylight, which left her more spiritually lovely than before, for all her tearful grief, found him merely unshaven.

"Where? Why, look!"

Pryor took her arm, caught it in a grip so tight that she winced. To his intense excitement her yielding flesh was more obstinate resisting muscle; he could not drive deep enough.

She looked and saw, as he had seen, the strange approaching figure. It came like a prophet, like a seer, like a bringer of great tidings. It did nothing with its limbs that sane men do when they set forth on the drab business of getting bread—for other people. Most of a man's toil is to get bread for other people.

It came so oddly, so flutteringly light, this figure; it came unsteady, ethereal. It seemed to sway between the misty

wet ground and impalpable sky. The drowsy old sun was making a mouth at it, looking faintly interested. This, after all, was something out of the common to see—this particular dawn was destined to be different. Pryor was looking hard, his lips moved. He was saying to himself:

"Peter's poetic strain has extended to his legs. He is what I should call heavenly drunk. A rather telling phrase that—heavenly drunk. And yet he doesn't reel or stagger, he—he feels. How slow he sets his feet—and tries the ground with every toe!"

Christine, womanwise, never waited for dissection. She rushed forward; the hilltops picked up the glad high note of her voice and carried it, sent intelligence.

"Peter! Peter!"

She had her arms round him; Pryor was afraid she would do him some damage; somehow, Peter did not seem to be just a workaday man. His new pose was baffling.

"Peter! Why don't you speak? Peter! Look at me—look. I want you to look."

"Christine! Darling, is it you? I can't look, sweet—thank God I can't see a single line of you and never, never shall."

The quiet, intense triumph of his voice was marvelous. Pryor came up, closed round him. Christine dropped her amorous arms; they went old all at once.

"Peter!" she said, in a wavering, awful way, "Peter!" But she was looking at Pryor for solution.

He had never seen anything more piteous, more helpless; his heart bled. How remorselessly these poor women were made to suffer with Love! She did not know, she had not guessed.

He was looking at Peter's blanched, blank eyes; they were wide open and startled, just like the young, ashamed morning. He flickered his fingers in front of them—and turned round to Christine and put his arms half round her and said quietly, "See."

She saw. Her lips said: "*Blind!*"—but not a sound came.

Had there ever been such a moment? Pryor took Peter's arm; he was half-surprised to find it just flesh—to have his fingers round a wet sleeve with something solid inside.

"Is that you, Pryor? I can't see; I'm quite blind." Peter laughed. "My goodness, isn't it a blessing?"

They all three went walking down the hill, went with a jaunty lilt, as people do in walking down hills; went in a dream; went merely like figures that are wound up to go. Christine took Peter's other arm. She hadn't a word to say. Facts had struck her brutally in the mouth. What a prize-fighter Fact is!

Between them she and Pryor took this afflicted and grateful man back to the house. He kept on talking—he did all the talking, or nearly all. Pryor threw in a dazed sentence now and then; he couldn't be shocked or sympathetic or hopeful or consoling. This wasn't the occasion for the trite, in spite of his assertion only a few hours before that you say the little things in the big moments. He couldn't be consoling. Consolation! Peter didn't need that. His face was most bewilderingly happy, his voice was jubilant. It piped like a shepherd's reed; it was all innocence and freedom. Christine listened to him, but she never spoke—not a word. She looked on his shoulder—so clean, so sharp, so steady. At the gate of the farm, while Pryor lifted the latch, she put her face down on this poor shoulder and gave an ugly sob—it was the harsh tearing of a heart, that sound.

Peter turned his head.

"Sweetheart—yes. You can put your dear face down with perfect safety. It—it has gone. Pryor, can't you congratulate me?"

"Congratulate! My dear old fellow, words—fail."

"Don't let us go in yet; stand still."

Peter turned his blank gaze from one to the other. "I see such beautiful things, I can imagine just how the world is this morning—a pale, shivering sort of dawn, a sulky old sun; every wave in a little greatcoat of gray.

Isn't that so? Blind! You may think so, but I see; I see for the first time in years. I see—as the rest of the world sees. If you two could only imagine what that means to me. I'm a man out of prison. Blind! The light—of perfect freedom—dazzles me. Christine, give me your mouth."

She lifted it and he kissed her solemnly.

"I can see your beautiful, blessed mouth, my own. It is quite red; it is absolutely perfect. Yet when I saw it last"—he shuddered so terribly that they had to lean against him; props to a tottering wall—"Christine, last night, when I came up and found you sleeping, your mouth was terrible; it—it murdered me. I have known all through that when you changed it was the last, the fatal change. I was heartbroken, frightened out of my wits. I was altogether swamped; didn't belong to myself any longer. I went—headlong, more or less, into the storm. You know that big gilt looking-glass in the parlor? I saw myself in that. Myself! No! I saw—my shoulder. I saw what you have seen, only a great deal more. And it looked so—so complacent. It—had me, you see. You had changed, too. All the world forsook me—even Love. I plunged into the storm, a perfect cauldron of a thing. And then—well, then the kind lightning came. And—that's all."

He laughed. He patted Pryor's hand.

"I can never give you my drama in definite details, old man. Forgive me. I don't know just what happened. I only know I'm free. I suppose I ought by rights to have a long illness and a sane convalescence. But I can never be the same as other people. I went on wandering about. I can see now; I can see clean. I shall do such work—you wait, Pryor, you scoffer, and see if I don't justify all the beautiful things you've been believing of me. Christine shall take it all down as I sit and look at it."

But Christine only put her face on his shoulder again and moaned.

Peter seemed impatient.

"You will hurt me if you are sorry, sweetheart. It is so—so unfeeling. Shall we go indoors? I know just where I am." He picked a bit of syringa and crushed it and snuffled at it. "Is Aunt Ann Grimes anywhere about? She is so clean, so brown, so russet. A firm mouth, not too much lip to it; steady eyes, a good, honest nose, none too beautiful. I can see every line of her this morning, and I really haven't seen her properly for months. I shall be able to see them all now; delightful creatures—Daniel Large, Walter Shuttle, Arethusa Miller. And I shall see the folk at church on Sundays; I can't tell you what a nightmare that church has been to me on Sundays—the evasive men and women in the pews, the kaleidoscopic parson in the pulpit. Thank heaven, that's over. I shall say my prayers like other men, without let or hindrance. To love, to pray, to work, to see the world quite clean, the world and the woman you love. What more need a man ask?"

He left off talking; he laughed again. His was the great new glory of emancipation, while Christine and Pryor, standing close up, were thinking

in a muddled, material way of a possible cure, some great surgeon and an operation. And they were wondering why on earth this affair of the storm, this pointed blow from the flaming heavens hadn't taken him as it has taken other men at other times. He stood there straight and sane and smiling—in perfect joy and health.

Tears stood, half-checked, on Christine's cheek, as if they could not make up their mind; to joy, to sorrow? Was she to take Peter's changed state as miracle or as calamity? There were things all around one, close and thick, not to be seen, never to be understood. The word miracle consoled her, somehow. She smiled into Pryor's grave, questioning eyes.

The pastoral world was beginning to wake, the great sea put on a robe of blue, the sun flung round him impenetrably dazzling cloth-of-gold. He decided to shine on the world; this was a dawn of some reputation.

"June!" said Peter suddenly, in a voice that tripped. "This is June again—and I can see it. Pryor, the wonderful work I am going to do—at last!"



THE LIMIT

GLADYS—Nothing can be more disagreeable than mosquitoes.

MYRTLE—Only that stuff the druggists sell to keep them away.



'WAS it a case of love at first sight?"

"Why, man alive! He was completely bowled over when he first saw a picture of her."

"It must have been a striking likeness."

THE TENANTRY BALL

By Juliet Wilbor Tompkins

THE people who were fond of Bertram—and there were really a good many—were given to answering those who were not with a tolerant, "Oh, well, Harvard often does that to a man for a year or two; he'll get over it. He is really a good fellow, underneath." But, after eight or ten years that argument lost force. No doubt Bertram might have got over it if fate had not given him a handsome mahogany desk in a handsome mahogany office wherein his father was chief potentate, thus starting him at the head of a dozen obsequious clerks instead of properly kicking him about the business purlieus until he was limbered into usefulness; and if to this disadvantage had not presently been added a prettily plaintive and exceedingly rich wife with false ideas concerning the word "aristocratic." Bertram really was a good fellow, in his way. He felt kindly toward everyone, and took especial pains to show it to those less fortunately placed. There was always a lift in his runabout for one on foot, concerned advice for another who coughed; it was a little hard that they were not more grateful. He had moments of being somewhat bitter over the world's ungenerous refusal to warm up in response.

"I drove half a mile out of my way to make a friendly suggestion to the Horners—and was somewhat snubbed for my trouble," he mentioned to his wife, sincerely puzzled, though decently light about it. "They are putting their new barn close beside the house—believe me, my dear, practically adjoining; so of course they will get all

the odor and noise. I felt I ought to point out to them how much better it would be behind that little fir plantation on the knoll."

"What did they say?" asked Frances, languidly interested.

"Oh, something not very courteous about its being just where they wanted it, and they reckoned they were the ones that would use it most. I didn't mind, of course; ignorant people can't help being rather boorish. But it is hard for me to understand that uncordial spirit."

"English farmers would have been pleased and grateful; your coming would have been an event to them," his wife sympathetically complained. She was seated by a wicker tea-table on the wide, red-tiled veranda, elaborate in fine white, her useless little feet crossed on a red cushion, her carefully waved hair shining bronze in the late sunlight. Pride in her softened Bertram's irritation as he took the chair opposite and the cup of tea, her lazy little hands held out to him.

"I suppose these Yankees can't help being cold and suspicious; they were born so," he admitted. "Lawless, too. I caught that Babcock lout trespassing again this morning, and warned him sharply. If it happens once more, I shall have him arrested and prosecuted."

"I certainly should," said Frances. Bertram tipped back in his chair with a deliberative frown.

"I should be sorry to. That sort of thing makes bad feeling, and I like to be on good terms with my neighbors. I can't live in a place and ignore the peasantry. That isn't my nature.

I consider it a gentleman's business to be on good terms with all classes, and to—" He broke off uncomfortably as he caught sight of his sister-in-law sitting just within the open French window, doing something surgical and unpleasant to a bat-eared puppy. She was smiling, the blunt smile that always sent hot prickles down his back.

"If the Howes and the Griggses and the Horners heard you refer to them as peasantry, Bertie," she said, "there would be an empty chair in our midst."

Ridicule from a young woman of whom one does not approve, a young woman who wears a black and white check waistcoat under a mannish coat and refers to the mothers of the kennels by a name to make polite ears wince, is not easy to swallow. Bertram stiffened and reddened.

"Peasantry is a good old term of established meaning, Anna," he explained with dignity. "I see no reason why it should give offense."

"Well, there are several good old terms of established meaning that nevertheless do give offense," suggested Anna, putting the last stitch in a scientific bandage. "For instance—"

"For pity's sake, don't tell us what they are, Anna," broke in her sister. "Come and take your tea if you have entirely finished—I won't have any doctoring where I have to see it."

Anna rose, tucking her patient under her arm: her stout boots made a boyish clatter on the tiles. Bertram rose also and stood with rigid formality until she was seated again. His manners were always beautiful.

"The truth is, Bertie," she began, and it was a phrase to make a man shrink, coming from Anna, "the truth is, the free-born rustic of these parts thinks himself quite as good as you, if not better. You don't invite him to your parties, but then neither does he invite you and Frances to his. You laugh at his quaint speech, and he laughs at your red hunting-coats and tandems and the anise-seed bag. You have money, but, from his standpoint, you don't know much—oh, he squares

it off very comfortably; and so of course he can't be properly grateful for your notice. You shouldn't expect it—should he, Rags?" The puppy directed a languid wipe at the chin above him, then dropped back on the checked waistcoat. Bertram eyed her distantly.

"I don't know but what you have given me an idea, Anna," he said generously. She glanced up, but her startled, almost hopeful, look faded as he went on: "What do you think, Frances, of giving a ball to the whole countryside—a tenantry ball? Everybody, you know—our friends as well as the farmers, and old country fare; a thoroughly informal, jolly occasion. And we could dance in the new stable—it's practically finished now." He sprang up energetically. "By Jove, that's a good idea!"

"You don't mean to ask people like those Halleys," Frances objected in a high, plaintive tone suggesting that she might cry if crossed, though as a matter of fact she was generally far too indolent for tears. "The woman has been trying for a year to get into our house; she would jump at this chance. I can't have her, Bertie, or those awful Greenways."

"Oh, dear, no; no half-way people like that. Just the—what we might call the gentry," he was careful to look blandly over the top of Anna's head, "and the villagers and tenants."

"Whose tenants?" asked Anna. "I'm sure we haven't any, and most of the farmers about here own their own land." Bertram passed over the interruption.

"I shall leave out that young Babcock fellow; that will be a better punishment than having him arrested," he went on. "I am sincerely sorry, but he has brought it on himself. You women must wear your plainest clothes, Frances; it wouldn't do to outshine our guests too obviously."

"There is my white satin; I am sure that is perfectly plain," Frances conceded.

"I shall wear neat blue overalls and my simplest tiara," said Anna, rising

abruptly. "I think I'll go and take a look at Bistre," she added.

"Yes, do; I am always glad of your opinion about the dogs," Bertram said graciously. "I asked Dr. Parker to come and see the old boy today."

Anna stopped short. "Bertie! You didn't!"

"Why not? He isn't a vet, of course, but he is an excellent physician. I explained to him that until the vet could get here I wanted the best talent available. Bistre is too valuable a dog for us to run any risks."

"That will be all over the village by night." Anna spoke with helpless exasperation. "Their venerated, white-headed old doctor—can't you see why the town-meetings always go solid against anything they think you wish? Some day these people will kill you, Bertie."

"My dear Anna, you are talking nonsense."

"Indeed I am not. You rub them the wrong way and never know it. I tell you straight, they will play a rough joke on you or your property some day."

"Oh, Anna, don't be tiresome," broke in her sister, and the girl, with a shrug, turned away. Her brother-in-law glanced after her with kindly superiority: there were moments when he had to grip that attitude very hard, but it never quite got away from him.

Anna put the puppy to bed and then sat down beside Bistre, blue-ribbon veteran of many dog-shows and founder of a famous tribe, now crippled with rheumatism and wheezing asthmatically. Bertie's interest in his kennels was somewhat perfunctory, coming from a sense of what he owed his station in life rather than from any human love of dogs; but his respect for aristocracy made him take keen satisfaction in the possession of the famous old English bull, and the veteran was treated with a seriousness that roused secret guffaws in the village. Nevertheless it was Anna who visited his sick-bed. She was talking to him now, rubbing his chest with practiced fingers, when an ancient phaeton, perilously

listed, drew up outside and a frock-coated figure backed out from under its hood with the caution of age and bulk. Anna jumped up.

"Oh, Dr. Parker! This is good of you!"

The doctor revolved slowly from between the wheels, presenting to her the mild, red face of a battered cherub.

"Well, Miss Anna, if there's anything I can do for the poor beast, I'm right glad to come." His benignant drawl was mellow with time and tolerance.

"I hain't had much experience of dogs, but still— Well, old man, pooty bad, ain't you!" he added, stooping laboriously to lay a sympathetic hand on Bistre's head.

"You're just bully," Anna burst out. "It shows how big you are—most doctors would have been furious. Bert is such a——!"

"Well, now, Miss Anna, he means all right. I kinder like the boy, myself."

"I can't say that I do," was the blunt answer. "He's a silly ass, and you know it!" The doctor was carefully feeling the dog's throat and chest.

"Well, I've known worse things than silly asses in my day," he admitted. "Liked 'em, too, somehow, Miss Anna!"

The gentry accepted at once, when the ball was proposed; acceptances from the country people came in more slowly. It was Bertram's misfortune that his cordial impulses were always met with suspicion; moreover, there was a critical reluctance to attending a ball given in a stable—by people known to own a ball-room—until Miss Tillinghast, who went about manicuring and so knew the ways of the rich, spread the reassuring report that "barn dances were all the rage in the Four Hundred." Youth and curiosity gradually brought them all in, though some tempered their acceptance by their manner of delivering it. "Guess ma and the girls will drop in to your shindig; I'll come myself 'f I ain't too busy," was a favorite form, called nonchalantly down from the top of a wagonload of pumpkins.

Bertram was persistently cordial. "When you understand these people you don't mind a little gruffness," he assured Frances. "They are enormously pleased, my dear, down inside."

There was one person who was frankly not pleased, inside or outside, and that was young Babcock, the trespasser, who had been sternly omitted from the invitation list. He was not a sensitive spirit, young Babcock, but the slight cut a good deal deeper than his impertinent surface betrayed. Having a reputation as a humorist, he babbled far and wide of his grievance, moving his listeners to roars of laughter, though they themselves would have been fiercely silent in his place.

The Sunday-morning group at the post-office was treated to a quaint comedy on the subject a few days before the ball. Babcock was abnormally long, giving an effect of weakly jointed laths, with a shock of sunburnt hair falling over his blue eyes like a terrier's, and a sallow little pointed face, impish and dimly pretty, that bore no relation to his eighteen years. He came in mysteriously, ignoring the group, and, dropping to his hands and toes, crept with high, cautious action to the letter-boxes, where he clawed himself up, stretched his lean neck until one eye could peer through a numbered glass door on the second row. Having tried it also with the other eye, he collapsed and faced his giggling, snorting fellows.

"Tain't there!" he said sadly. "That invite ain't come yet!"

"By golly, I'd go anyhow, 'f I was you," they exclaimed when they were coherent again. He shook his head.

"No. I'm getting my just deserts. I deserve *wuss*. Know what? But it's too bad. Guess I can't tell you till the girls go."

The girls insisted, with tears of laughter. "Isn't he the cutest!" was their constant aside.

"Well, then—I don't suppose you'll none of you ever speak to me again. But I met that great and glorious dorg Blister on the road week before

last, and—say, it was awful!—I didn't take off my hat. Just passed him like he'd been Bill's yeller pup. I don't know what got inter me—guess I was feeling too durn democratic that day. But it don't pay." He slowly pulled himself to his ridiculous height. "Little children, always respect your betters, and you'll get the invite every time."

It was unfortunate that Bertram should have pulled up his runabout before the post-office just at that moment.

"Good morning, everybody," he called genially. "Will one of you bring me my mail?" It was a perfectly natural request from a man holding a fretting horse, and several young fellows started forward; but something in the lean, weazened smile of Babcock, watching them from under his sunburnt thatch with folded arms and the tip of a derisive tongue against his upper lip, made them halt awkwardly. The pause was brief, but unmistakable.

"Oh, for the land's sake!" muttered one of the girls, darting forward. Bertram was slightly flushed when he took the letters and papers from her.

"Thank you, my dear girl," he said, and drove away with squared shoulders, doggedly impervious to the high, thin hoot of laughter that suddenly broke from Babcock.

"Thank you, my good woman," mimicked the humorist; "take this for your trouble, my good man!" And he strolled away, whistling piercingly. The laughter that followed him was not without soreness.

The day of the ball was marked somewhat sadly by the death of Bistre. Bertram was too much absorbed in preparations to pay much attention to the event, but Anna stroked the old head with real tenderness and designed a little headstone that should set forth his rank and prowess.

The new stable, waxed and garlanded and shining with lights, was a beautiful sight that evening. There were casks of cider and of ale, sur-

rounded by shining tankards, and a long table showed a brave array of roasts and game, jellies and sweets—sturdy delicacies dimly remembered out of old books, while the stair platform held violinists disguised as fiddlers. Bertram had insisted on a dinner to their own friends first, that these might be properly in the spirit of the occasion by the time the country folk should arrive. They were a goodly company when they took possession of the great, new, clean place, the men, by request, in white flannels or hunting scarlet, the women expressing simplicity by leaving off their jewels.

"And it is really safer, you know, Pussy dear!" a far-sighted matron said consolingly to a lean young woman, whose reefs and crags looked a little startling without their usual drapery of pearls. "Dear knows what we shall dance with!"

"I should think we could show cordiality without actually dancing with them." The tip of Pussy's long nose expressed prophetic distaste for what it might be called on to encounter.

"Oh, you would miss half the fun," said Mrs. Calender, who was gaily stout and played at being adventurous. "Don't you think, Bertie, that we ought to dance with everyone?" Bertram, pink-coated and beamingly affable, nodded assent.

"Oh, rather! I have chosen Molly Riggs to open the ball with."

"Lucky girl! It will be a proud occasion for Molly." Mrs. Calender smiled. Experience of Anna made Bertram glance uneasily at the smile, but it was reassuringly simple.

"It will be something for her to tell her grandchildren," added Anna, who had joined them. She, too, seemed perfectly simple, but Bertram with massive dignity changed the subject.

Anna hated evening dress, and had seized tonight the excuse of their mixed crowd to be in white linen, severe and immaculate. This and her straight chestnut hair, brushed smoothly back on the sides, marked her off sharply from the other women, and gave

her, in the eyes of two or three, a cool virginal distinction that reduced the fluffed prettiness of the rest to dull commonplace. She danced silently with whoever asked her, liking the exercise, but profoundly indifferent to the occasion. Then, a breath of cool October air from an opened door caught her wandering attention; she suddenly realized that Bertram was looking out perplexedly into the quiet night, and that the guests were exchanging wondering or quizzical glances. Not one of their country neighbors had come.

Bertram turned back, signaled to the musicians to keep it up, laughed and joked with those nearest; but the color had gradually left his face.

"He's game, anyway," Anna admitted to herself, and threw her energies into backing up his determined gaiety; they tacitly set out to arouse a general enthusiasm for dancing. It was a miserable business to them, but the others kindled readily; a new spirit took possession.

"After all, it is a great deal nicer, just ourselves," said Frances contentedly, half an hour later, and her husband smiled assent with stiff lips. Anna impulsively put her hand on his sleeve.

"Come in here a moment," she said, and led the way to the harness-room, set apart tonight for wraps. "What do you think it means?" she asked when the door closed behind them. Bertram let his brightness drop.

"I suppose it means an intentional insult," he said wearily, his hand against his forehead. "God knows why. I have always tried to be on good terms with the common people. I've gone out of my way to—"

"I know you have," she interrupted, with unusual gentleness. "There may be some mistake, or some big, dreadful accident down in the village. Why don't you take a horse and ride quietly down? Perhaps you can find out something without being seen yourself." Her one idea was to give him a respite from the ordeal. He caught at it eagerly and a few moments later she

heard his horse's quick trot on the gravel.

The ball was going gaily, even hilariously, now, and no one noticed Bertram's absence; but Anna's flicker of relief at getting him off quickly died out, leaving an unbearable depression. Her heart seemed to grow heavier with every moment, and a new apprehensiveness crept up and up like icy water into which she was being forced. Why had she let him go off alone like that? Of course he was all right; it was absurd to think anything else. And yet—they hated him, and tonight they were obviously his enemies. What could be the grievance that was keeping them all away? They had intended to come; Molly Riggs had told her, shyly, of the new gown she was making, and jovial remarks on the subject had met her only the day before in the village, where she was well liked. She had no belief in a universal calamity; no, in some way Bertram had given fresh offense, and perhaps was even now being confronted with the fact—poor, stiff-necked, bewildered Bertram, too obtuse to appease them and too brave to conciliate! Half an hour would give him more than enough time to reconnoiter and return; when it had dragged past she slipped out and listened intently, but there was nothing to hear or see except wind stirring in the elms and clouds scudding raggedly across a small, cold moon. She went back and took her place in a Virginia reel. Mrs. Callender, jiggling recklessly beside her in the line, incited her to a private whirl while they awaited their turn.

"Isn't it fun?" she panted.

"Great," laughed Anna. "Let's have it faster!" A jovial "Faster!" echoed her from both sides. Anna dashed through her turn, then dropped out, laughing and panting. No one noticed as she escaped by a side door.

The avenue was still and empty. Hesitatingly, with many pauses to listen, she followed it down to the entrance, where lights were still blazing welcome from the great gates. In their radiance Anna suddenly stopped

and bent down to look intently at the road under her feet. It was marked and ridged with fresh wheel tracks, all making a complete circle in front of the gates; evidently many wagons had driven up, turned and gone away again that night.

"What can it mean?" she muttered. She turned to look back, and the explanation met her with glaring suddenness. On the right-hand post under the lamp hung a huge white placard lettered in staring black and easily readable from the road:

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

DEATH IN THE FAMILY!

BALL POSTPONED!

OWING TO THE SUDDEN PASSING AWAY OF OUR ESTEEMED AND VALUABLE ENGLISH BULL-DOG, BISTRE, THERE WILL BE NO DANCE TONIGHT.

Bertram's name was signed in full. "Outrageous!" she exclaimed stiffening with anger. "Who could have done it?" She tore the poster down; but even in the act her wrath was forgotten, drowned in a cold wave of fear. If the outraged citizens met Bertram tonight, would they give him time to explain?

"I must have help!" she cried; then, with a gasp of relief, she ran to meet a familiar old tilted phaeton, jogging peacefully home in the moonlight from a distant case.

Wagonload after wagonload, earlier that night, had paused before the open gates, read the notice, stared in wonder and growing affront, then turned back, the men derisive or grimly silent, some of the girls in tears, all hot with anger and mortification. Put off for a dead dog! After all their wagon-washing and harness-cleaning and shaving and bathing, after the frantic sewing and pressing and curling of the women, the joyous anticipation that had broken out in singing and whistling for a week

past, the last-minute flashes of temper and the scramble not to be late—and they were put off for a dog. They were landowners, honorable followers of honorable trades, descendants of a strong and splendid stock that had helped make the country what it was; and this shallow, upstart millionaire had flung a dead dog in their faces.

"By gum, that settles *him*," they muttered as they jerked back the brake and turned the willing horses.

They met other wagonloads on the road and told the news, for the most part drily and with few words, the grieved faces of the girls showing pale in the light of their lanterns. Some fell behind them, others drove on to see for themselves. The older and tamer members of the community turned off to their homes, but the young men and a few square-browed, lank-jawed elders pulled up in silent harmony of purpose before the town hall. Someone brought the keys, the lights were lit and they filed somberly in between the rows of benches. A grizzled, black-bearded man of about forty mounted the platform and met their set look.

"Well, boys, haven't we stood about enough?" he asked quietly.

A Latin community would have met this with uproar. There was a subdued shifting of boots, here and there a folding of muscular arms, but only one laconic voice answered:

"Jest about enough!"

The discussion went forward at first in the same temper; an outsider might have taken their restraint for hesitation or indifference. Then little by little the smoldering rage betrayed itself; faces began to flush, an occasional angry laugh broke out at some reminiscence of Bertram's lordliness, or a curse for his affability. An ironic mention of the dog roused hisses and catcalls. Voices became rough and loud and threats grew from hints to open speech. At last the clenched fist of the voluntary chairman came down sharply on the table.

"By God, we're Americans, and our fathers plowed this same land before us, and I say we won't stand his like

in our community so long as there's a fence rail left to ride him out of it on!"

A shout answered him. They were already on their feet, tense and reckless, when the door swung back and Bertram stood confronting them, Bertram in his hunting scarlet, his riding-crop in his hand, a patrician frown on his forehead. The suddenness of his appearance struck them silent as he came forward.

"I apologize for intruding," he began coldly, "but I happened to see your lights, and I have been trying for half an hour to find anyone who was still up. I merely wish to ask——"

"No use," broke in a dry voice. "We can't act as pallbearers—we all got another engagement." A roar of laughter followed, and they closed round Bertram with rough jests and dangerous faces. He might have done something with a rough jest of his own; but he faced them in frigid dignity.

"Will you kindly explain——?"

"Oh, to hell with your airs and graces!" interrupted a harsh shout echoed by the others. They crowded closer about him, hustling him toward the door. "We've had enough of you and your grand ways and your dog! You rode down on a fine horse, but, by God, you'll ride back on a finer!"

There was a yell of applause, and three youths dashed from the hall as though at a spoken command, leaving the door open. Bertram, bewildered, but courageous, started furiously to break loose, but they gripped his arms and wrenched away his crop. They had him nearly down when the tense silence of the scuffle was broken by a girl's voice, a clear, accusing, angry voice.

"Which of you did this?" They turned to see Anna glowering at them from the doorway, the poster held out toward them; she had jumped from the phaeton before it stopped and her first glance had given her her line of action. "Which of you played this abominable trick on us?" she repeated, in a voice that cut through the passions of the moment to their sober understanding. "We've been waiting up there for our guests the whole evening

—and all the time this cruel, idiot joke has been turning them away. You may call it funny—I say it was damnable!”

There was no doubting her sincerity. They stared at her amazedly.

“Then you folks—didn’t know it was there?” someone asked.

“Know it? Do you suppose it would have stayed up two moments if we had?” And she tore it contemptuously across. “Oh, it was a funny joke, wasn’t it!”

The anger in their faces had died down to dismay and mortification; their eyes wavered and fell before hers and they awkwardly drew away from Bertram. He, still too angry to care about understanding, walked blindly past Anna, and nearly stumbled over a group just outside. The unmistakable length of the Babcock youth lay face down and squirming on the sidewalk, while the portly bulk of the doctor knelt firmly between his shoulder-blades.

“Hello, in there!” The mild old voice brought them crowding out. “I reckon this is the joker,” he said with his mellow drawl. “I noticed him sauntering past, and I just managed to

fall on top of him, somehow. Want him, boys?”

His off hand tone and the contrast of his venerable form with the long, loose, writhing slats beneath struck just the right note for their strained nerves. There was a burst of laughter, relieved, honest, good-tempered laughter. They helped him up, letting the boy escape with a cuff or two, then came reluctantly after Bertram.

“Say, I guess we owe you an apology,” they began uncomfortably. It was his chance to win them solidly for life; but poor Bertram mounted and rode away without a word or a glance.

Light and music were still streaming from the new stable when Anna and the doctor drove up the avenue. A final lancers had formed and Bertram was chasséing gaily before Mrs. Callender, carrying his immovable blandness as he would have carried a banner into the thick of battle, if that were his obligation as a gentleman. Anna’s eyes suddenly filled.

“Dear old Bert—he is game,” she said impulsively.

“Well, you know, I’m kinder fond of the boy,” mused the doctor.



THE EMPTY LIFE

By Theodosia Garrison

I HAVE closed all my life and shut the door
As men may close that house wherein one died
Who one day loved them there, that nevermore
May lesser lover in its hold abide.

Why should my door stand open to the sun,
Seeing the guest supreme hath gone his way?
What welcome have I for another one—
What lamp to mock the glory of the day?

Naught would that other tenant find but this—
Rust on the hearth and dust upon the floor,
And that poor ghost that once was living bliss—
I have closed all my life and shut the door.

THAT NIGHT

By Madison Cawein

THAT night I sat listening, as in a swoon,
With half-closed eyes,
To far-off bells, low-lulling as a tune
That drifts and dies
Beneath the flowery fingers of the June
Harping to Summer skies.

And then I dreamed the world I knew was gone,
And someone brought—
Leading me far o'er sainted hill and lawn,
In heavenly thought—
My soul where well the sources of the dawn
With dew and fire fraught.

Above me the majestic dome of night,
With star on star,
Sparkled; in which one star shone blinding bright;
Radiant as spar
That walls the halls of morning, pearly white
Around her golden car.

About me temples, vast in desert seas,
Columned a land
Of ruins—bones of old monstrosities
God's awful hand
Had smitten; homes of dead idolatries,
O'erwhelmed with dust and sand.

Their bestial gods, caked thick with gems and gold—
Their blasphemies
Of beauty, rent; 'mid shattered altars rolled;
Their agonies
And rites abolished; and their priests of old,
Dust on the desert breeze.

Then Syrian valleys, purple with veiling mist,
Meseemed I trailed,
Where the frail floweret, by the dewdrop kissed,
Soft-blushing, quailed;
And drowned in dinged deeps of amethyst
The moon-mad bulbul wailed.

On glimmering wolds I seemed to hear the bleat
Of folded flocks;
Then shepherds passed me, bare of head and feet;
And then an ox
Low'd; and above me swept the solemn beat
Of angel wings and locks.

A manger then I seemed to see where bent,
In adoration,
Above a Babe, men of the Orient,
Where, low of station,
His mother lay, while round them swam sweet scent
And sounds of jubilation.

And then I woke. The rose-white moon above
Bloom'd on my sight—
And in her train the stars of Winter drove,
Light upon light;
While Yuletide bells rocked, pealing, "Peace and love!"
Down all the aisles of night.



LANGUAGE OF THE MOTOR-CAR

By Carolyn Wells

SKIDDING around a curve: I am nervous.
Whizzing past a policeman: Follow me.
Losing control of the machine: I see my finish.
Backing: I am so shy.
Punctured tire: Wait for me.
Increasing speed: I dare all.
Turning a corner and running into another car: This is so sudden!
Plunging: I am of an excitable nature.
Turning upside down: I am roguish.
Meeting a dog: I will run over and see you.
Standing still: I am a self-starter.
Coasting: Everything goes.
Squeaking: I have troubles of my own
Running into a tree: I am hurt.
Back firing: You gave me such a start!
A muddy road: I'm stuck on you.



MANY a man spends his evenings at a club because his wife is waiting at home for him with one.

A DISPENSER OF FATE

By Arthur Sullivant Hoffman

HIS steps splashed somewhat wearily along the glistening pavement with its writhing shadows from the flaring little lamps. The wind, rushing down the long cañon of the street, gustily seeking its outlet along the solid wall of houses on either side, sent flurries of cold rain under the tugging umbrella. At one flight of dripping steps exactly like all the others he turned in, mechanically searching among his keys with the fingers of one hand. He paused to let the water run from his umbrella, then unlocked the great street door into the dimly lighted hall with the silent emptiness of those old mansions now serving as lodging-houses for the hosts that come year after year to find fortune or failure in the great city.

When he turned at the top of the stair the darkness ahead was broken by the firelight shining through his half-open door. As he entered his eyes encountered the figure of a man standing motionless in the centre of the room, a young man of fair appearance, hatless and wearing a loose smoking-jacket. There was neither alarm nor resentment in the listless face, but the light from the fire shone on the steel of a revolver held loosely down before him in both hands. The eyes met his own doggedly, then dropped to the floor. There was no other movement.

For an instant the older man stood framed in the doorway, motionless and intent, the water dripping slowly from the umbrella in his hand. The flickering lights and shadows played over his questioning, sensitive face, emphasizing the warring strength and weakness of the features and making

deeper the lines the years had set there.

Then his eyes quickened, swept around the undisturbed room and returned to the motionless hands and passive face. The other stood irresolute, flushing beyond the glow of the fire.

"I hardly know what to say," he articulated dully. "I oughtn't to have come in at all. I live on the floor above. But your door stood open and I saw—I haven't meddled with anything except—" He laid the revolver slowly on the table.

"There is no harm whatever," broke in the older man, his indecision vanished, "none at all. Unless you go." He smiled pleasantly as he came forward and placed his umbrella against the mantel. "I am feeling far too lonely tonight to lose the chance of company. I should like very much to have you stay."

The younger man had stood uncertain while the other was speaking, but at the first pause he seemed to collect himself, though the flush of embarrassment remained upon his face.

"It's very good of you to take it that way, not knowing me or anything. But I can't make it worse by staying after—"

"Not at all! And I have passed you often enough in the hall or on the stair to feel more or less acquainted. Take this big chair by the fire while I find some cigars and mix a little something to make us feel at peace with the world. Sit down," he concluded, smiling, with one hand on the back of the great chair, and then, as if to make demur useless, crossed

the room to some shelves in a corner and began taking down bottles and glasses. The other, still visibly ill at ease, hesitated before replying. Then the uncertainty in his face gave way before an expression of indifference.

"You're very good indeed," he said listlessly, turning toward the proffered seat. "I'll stay a while, then, only I'll be rather cheerless company."

"Anyone is likely to feel cheerless a night like this if he is by himself," replied the host comfortably. "That was what I was fearing on my own account. Won't you try one of these? A match? I must ask your indulgence while I finish mixing."

He continued talking briskly while his hands fumbled among the few bottles in the corner away from the line of vision of his guest, who sat staring into the fire, seemingly absorbed more in his own thoughts than in the words or actions of his host. The latter made slow progress, for his eyes were most of the time upon the other man, and the troubled expression of his face was singularly at variance with the light talk that flowed from his lips.

When at last the two sat on either side of a little table before the fire the host, turning from one topic to another, gradually led the younger man from almost monosyllabic responses to replies of greater length and a somewhat divided attention. Even when the other roused to something like an adequate interest the brunt of the conversation fell to the host, and though he carried it with an unflagging zeal and nervous force incongruous with his type, yet he carried it and almost without pause. From time to time, when he could do so unobserved, he glanced quickly at his visitor, whose own eyes remained nearly continuously upon the fire. He had placed his chair farther back than the guest's so that while he talked the other's face stood out in the firelight like a cameo against the semi-darkness beyond, the lips relaxed, the eyes dull, the surface unlined and negative except for certain passing marks that might have come

from the dissipations conventional to young men.

The older man was speaking of the weather once more as he reached forward to break open some coals into renewed flame.

"But there are the compensations. It is when it is raw and cold outside that we appreciate the boon of roofs and warming fires."

"Yes," said the other listlessly; "but out in the rain you don't see it that way."

The host's eyes turned to him searchingly. "Oh, we must all go out in the rain now and then. That is to keep us from forgetting how good the compensations are. And it may stop raining at any time. Don't forget that."

"Yes," replied the guest a little irritably, "and it may get worse." Then, his irritation breaking bounds: "A man knows when he's down and out! You can tell the difference between a bad body-blow and a clean knockout."

The older man answered quickly: "But not until afterward. And you mustn't beg the question, you know. The point is this—the man generally thinks he is done for when he isn't at all. He loses his sense of proportion for the time and is tempted to make a fool of himself instead of waiting to see how it will look a little later."

The other was silent a moment. Then he said: "He may make himself believe he has another chance, but it doesn't follow that he has. He may think it over for a day or a week and then find it's just as bad as he thought it was. Or a month or a year or all his life!" he went on, suddenly more vehement. "Some things are too much for a fellow."

"Or he thinks they are too much for him," said the host quietly. "I fear we are arguing in a circle. But there are other things. What happens to him if he does—not wait? Is it better or worse? At least it is a sin against society—he has no right to shirk the part assigned him. If a man kills a man, it is murder. If the man he kills is himself, it is murder, too, and worse.

And what would his fellows think of him? After the first vulgar sensation there would be only contempt for the coward. Even the lowest animal will fight when cornered—can a man do less?"

The guest stirred impatiently, then spoke with ill-repressed sharpness.

"How much do you suppose all that stuff would count with a man facing a thing like that? I'll wager you'd strike a different key if you'd ever faced it yourself! It's all well enough and easy to settle it for another man—the man wouldn't do it, either, if he was somebody else."

After a first quick glance at the sullen face the older man sat very quiet, staring straight ahead, the firelight flickering over the thin features and worn eyes. When the other finished there was no reply, and the guest sank back into his old position, the fingers of one hand tapping nervously on the chair-arm, the silence broken only by the settling of the embers in the fire. Presently the older man, still motionless, said very quietly:

"I think I do understand, in a way."

The drumming of the fingers stopped for a moment, then went on as before. The host made no sign. Finally he spoke again, slowly, his gaze no longer turning to the younger man:

"I knew of a man once who faced it—knew his case intimately, though he had no friends. He had never known his mother, and after her death his father lived like a recluse with his books and his one child. The boy always felt that even he was shut off from him by a barrier that precluded any intimacy or real companionship. Yet the one hope left the father was to make his son a great writer. He educated him himself and there were seldom any playmates. It was a peculiar life the boy led.

"Their money dwindled to a scanty living. The boy, though he had been taught to hold literature sacred, knew he had no other talent, and gradually came the resolve to go to New York and earn not only fame, but the needed comforts for the broken

old man's closing days. The father made no opposition.

"I need not tell you how it turned out. He came to the great city, and the noise and hurry and heartlessness deadened what youth was left in him."

He ceased speaking, his eyes unseeing. Suddenly the eyes grew more alert and a moment later he resumed:

"And there was a girl. He was to work out their happiness, too, in New York.

"The reality crushed him. No one seemed to want what he wrote. I sha'n't bother you with all the downward steps. At last, in the nick of time, he secured a position with a large publishing house, doing hack-work. He sent home part of his meager salary, telling his father it was the proceeds from things he had written, which were not good enough to send home. Naturally his letters became more infrequent. The lie preyed on him most of all.

"It was bad enough as it was. Then an old neighbor visiting New York hunted him up and the truth was out."

He paused again. Neither stirred.

"They say his mother's death broke his father's heart, but soon after the news of his son's failure and deception the gentle old man died—died without a word to the boy. The boy managed to go home to the funeral. Then he came back to New York and went on with the hack-work.

"One day there came a letter from the girl, a kind and gentle letter, but ending their engagement because someone else had come into his place."

The host paused, his brows drawn. Speaking more to himself than to the other, he murmured: "And yet . . . and yet, with a girl like that it wouldn't be so hard as if there had never been anyone—"

He resumed quickly: "He told me about it one day, by some strange chance—he didn't have any intimates. And he couldn't bring himself to destroy her picture, so he gave it to me and I have kept it ever since. That is it in the closed locket hanging above

the mantel. That and his revolver make good object-lessons.

"He said he summed up all the reasons for not taking his life and they meant nothing. He did not have the help of religion. But he fell to wondering why he was struggling at all. If one side was strong, the other must be, or there would have been no struggle. The dull anger against Fate became more and more an impulse to fight her decrees. He found himself venting his unrest upon his daily work, and he saw, too, that his very resistance to the temptation had become a kind of object in life. That was his start. The future was not bright before him, but he was thankful he had not given up and that he had at least proved himself a man. Out of all the hell he had been through that was the one abiding thing—that he had not been a coward and was playing out his part."

The host looked over at his silent guest. "Of course, there are other conditions that may tempt a man, but there is always a way for him to go on somehow and somewhere. It isn't what he will gain by it, but whether he will go on."

After a moment during which neither spoke, the other asked in a low tone: "What's he doing now?"

"Oh, he is still going on. He has a better position now, and is fairly comfortable. His work is still hack-work, though of a better kind. The point is that he is going on."

The young man turned suddenly in his chair.

"I think I understand what you're driving at, now," he said. "It's pretty muddy work trying to reason it out. What a man has to do is to *feel*! He can't explain it, but there's something down in him that makes him hate a quitter. If that friend of yours could fight it out, anyone else ought to! That's a lot worse than going up against some one big thing—the trouble with him was that there *wasn't anything*—never had been anything except the girl and the thing he couldn't do! No friends, no family, no relatives, no chance for much in his work, nothing

he wanted, nothing he could get—just a day after day grind till they buried him. Anything but that!"

The older man caught his breath sharply. After the first rush of blood to his face he had gone very white. The other drove along, his torpor vanished.

"The only thing that a fellow can do is just to shut his eyes and go on fighting for nothing in particular, and the worst of it is that a chap like that's not made for fighting! He ain't the kind! Ought to have somebody to look after him and take care of him and cheer him up. Somebody to work for—a wife or something like that. He ain't the fighting kind, and yet that's the only thing left for him to do. *Anything but that!*"

The host rose suddenly, his face drawn, and began pushing back with his foot some blackened coals that lay out upon the hearth. The guest, too, came to his feet.

"I'm going now," he said. "It was mighty good of you not to mind my butting in that way and to make me stay and—*and everything.*"

"Not at all," the older man answered, his face still away from the other. "I was glad to have you. Come in again."

He held open the door to light the guest on his way along the hall, replied to his good night and watched the dim shape disappear in the darkness. Then he drew shut the door.

He stood a moment, his hand still on the knob, regarding the empty chairs, large and shadowy in the half-light of the dying fire; then his hand slipped from the knob and he moved slowly across the room. From above the mantel he took down the little closed locket, still slowly, as one walking in his sleep, sank again into his chair, and sat there a long time, the locket, unopened, loose in his fingers.

Presently, as if the act required some will, he opened it. Inside was the picture of an old man.

He paced back and forth across the room, back and forth, back and forth, still as one who walks in sleep, his face

dull and listless. The distance traversed began to grow less and less till he finally came to a stop by the writing-table in the centre of the room, where the revolver lay as the guest had left it, the light glinting faintly over its polished steel. He took it up quietly and stood there with the weapon held down before him in his two hands, the long thin fingers clicking the cylinder round and round. There was no other sound.

From his feet his huge shadow stretched out before him across the dingy carpet to the dingy bureau, over it and up the bare wall beyond. The last embers of the fire settled with a dry, tinkling sound, followed by the

crush of ashes. He laid the revolver once more upon the table.

Mechanically he began his preparations for the night. His coat and waistcoat were placed over the straight back of a little chair. He lifted the heavy comfortable from the foot of the bed and dropped it upon the floor; turned back the covers and tucked them in at the bottom carefully. Stooping, he picked up the comfortable and began unfolding it. Suddenly he let it fall from his hands, turned sharply and went to the window, raised the creaking sash and stood staring a long time, regardless of the cold wind that blew in from the night.

Then he turned back into the room.



COME BACK

By Aloysius Coll

THROUGH all the song and clamor of the crowd
I listened for your clear, low voice—in vain;
But here, the woodland's violets at my feet,
I hear your voice again!

Not one of all the faces in the throng
So fair I whispered softly, "It is she!"
I gaze into the lonely flower's face—
And you look up at me!

Not one of all the hands I clasped in mine
So warm I dreamed I held your finger-tips;
But now I press a rose into my face—
You kiss me on the lips!

Not one of all the shadows at my feet
Comforted me, until a little child
Drew near, and from the refuge of my arms,
Looked up at me, and smiled!

I knew then you had moved the yellow clay,
With magic hands, and rolling back the stone,
A shadow that I could not fear, you crept
Into my arms—alone!

THE PRIZE STORY

By Mabel Herbert Uner

STANDFORD'S MAGAZINE

158 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

Editorial Rooms

May 2, 1906.

DEAR MISS HARMON:

It is with real regret that we are returning another of your manuscripts. We feel so confident that you can give us other stories of equal strength and originality with your "Anchored" that we are reluctant to accept anything from you of less merit.

We have received letters from all over the country expressing appreciation of "Anchored," and the hope that we will soon publish more of your stories. Our decision in giving it the \$10,000 prize over almost eighteen thousand manuscripts has been more than justified. There has been hardly a dissenting voice as to the judgment of our award. It is probable that "Anchored" has aroused more interest and more discussion than any other short story ever published. On account of all this, and the keen interest with which thousands of our readers are awaiting your next story, we are most anxious that it be not a disappointment.

We shall be glad to discuss with you at any time any plans or outlines for a story that you may have in mind.

Very sincerely,

W. L. WALKER,
Editor.

To Miss Margaret F. Harmon,
The Rockford,
New York.

SHE laid down the letter with a little sob. Oh, if they only knew!

If they only knew! She could never give them another story like "Anchored." That had been the story of her life—her pitiful, narrow, starved life; and she had poured into it all the longing and hungriness of her heart. She had written it with no thought of publication, but because she could not help it. It was the outpouring of years of repression.

When it took the first prize in the

great Stanford contest it had seemed like some wonderful dream. She had left the little Western town and come to New York to find something very near fame awaiting her.

And then letters began to pour in to her from editors and publishers all over the country, wanting short stories, long stories, articles—anything she had to give them. And she had nothing to give! And in her heart she knew she never would have!

But she tried. Oh, how she tried! The long, weary days that she sat at her desk and racked her brain, trying to force from it something it never held! The headaches and heartaches and the dreary sense of failure! After weeks of painful effort, the pitiful, trite little stories she forced out! How she struggled with words and sentences in the hope that the poverty of the conception might be hidden by a clever handling of words.

If it were only the magazines and the public to be disappointed, it would have been easier to bear. But it was the man she loved. She had been in New York only a few weeks when she met him. Almost from the first she knew that it was love that she gave—out of all her wonderful capacity for love that had been starved and repressed for so long.

And he—that he was deeply interested in her, she knew. But how much of it was interest in herself and how much in the author of "Anchored" she did not know.

He was constantly referring to her story, to its vivid realism, its strength and originality, to her wonderful power of word painting. He was constantly

urging her to write; that she owed it to herself as well as to the public to develop a talent so marked. And she listened with a feeling of helpless despair. Her explanation for not writing short stories was that she was devoting all her time to a book. But she knew that was only a temporary evasion. It could not be used indefinitely.

She spent hours in trying to plan other evasions. She thought of losing the manuscript; of saying, about the time the book should be finished, that she had left it in a cab or dropped it on the street on her way to have it typewritten. She could feign such grief and despondency over the loss that she would not be expected to write anything more soon.

She even thought of becoming ill, of feigning nervous prostration, or of going to a sanatorium and there bribing the doctors into saying that she must not write any more, that she could never stand the nervous strain of it.

She would make any sacrifice of truth or conscience, she would stoop to any artifice, if she could only keep his belief in her talent. She would bear anything rather than his disappointment, his disillusionment; that he should find he had idealized her for something she did not possess.

The manuscript *Standford's Magazine* had returned she opened and read again, with a vague hope that she might find in it something that would be worth working over and sending to another periodical. But there was nothing there—absolutely nothing. The subject was trite and the style painfully strained. As she re-read it now it seemed to her even more pitifully forced and barren than when she wrote it. Some inferior magazine might take it simply because it bore her name—the winner of the Standford prize. But that would only betray her. The public would know then, and he would know, that she had nothing better to give. It would be far wiser to go on saying that she was writing a book and had not the time for short stories.

With an effort she forced herself to glance over the rest of the morning's mail. There were several letters and a small flat package; an invitation to a reception at the Chalk and Pencil Club, some book circulars and a closely written letter in a hand that she did not recognize. It was addressed in care of *Standford's Magazine* and forwarded by them.

RIDGEVILLE, TENN.,
April 30, 1906.

DEAR MISS HARMON:

I wonder if in the midst of your success, you will find time to give a word of advice to an unknown woman in Tennessee. For weeks I have been wanting to write you, but did not have the courage. It is only my desperate need that gives it to me now. This is my daughter's last year at the High School here, and unless I can make some extra money she cannot finish.

There was something in your story, "Anchored," that made me think of a few stories I wrote during the early years of my married life. It has been so long since I wrote them, almost fifteen years, that I can now look at them impersonally, and it seems to me that they have some merit. I do not hope to sell them to any magazine, but perhaps there is some syndicate or newspaper that might take them. I have never submitted anything for publication, and know nothing of literary markets. If you could send me a few addresses where I might sell these manuscripts, I should be sincerely grateful.

I am sending you a copy of the stories, in the hope that you may have time to glance over them, so you could better advise me. They are signed "George Maddox," as I do not wish to use my own name, for they deal too intimately with my life, the dreams and ideals of my girlhood and the pitiless disillusionment that came with my marriage.

It has been very hard for me to write this letter, to tell my need and ask the assistance of a stranger. If I did not feel that so much of my daughter's future depended on this last year of schooling, I could not have done it.

Very sincerely,
MARY WOODARD.

She put aside the letter and opened the roll of manuscripts. They were written with a pen, in a small cramped hand. She glanced over one hurriedly—a sentence here and there. Then she turned back to the first page and read it through. When she had finished she turned back again and read it through once more. She read them

all—five long, closely written manuscripts. Then she started up and walked around the room, nervously clasp and unclasp her hands.

That an unknown woman in Tennessee should have written those stories—stirring, powerful stories, with a depth of feeling and delicacy of treatment that was marvelous!

It haunted her that the style was so strangely like "Anchored." The same short, terse sentences, the same simplicity and directness that the critics had so praised in her story. She saw in them the stories she should have written; the stories the public and *Standford's Magazine* were waiting for; the stories *he* expected from her.

Again she re-read the letter; then she re-read all the manuscripts. And then for almost an hour she sat at her desk drawing small scroll-like figures on the blotting-pad. When the blotter was almost covered with the drawings she threw down the pen and hurried across the room to the telephone. A quick search through the directory, and then she took down the receiver.

"Hello! Will you give me 5860 Franklin? . . . Is that the B. & O. ticket office? . . . Does your road go to Ridgeville, Tennessee? . . . Yes, Ridgeville, Tennessee. . . . Yes, I will hold the 'phone."

A long wait.

"Yes, hello! To Clarkstown? Ten miles from Ridgeville? And from there by stage? . . . What is the first train I can take? . . . Twelve-thirty via Nashville? Thank you. Good-bye."

She wrote a few hurried notes, packed a suit-case, telephoned for a cab, and at 12.30 she was on her way to Ridgeville, Tennessee.

It was all very simple. Mrs. Woodard was glad to give her stories in return for the generous cheque, far more than she had ever thought they could bring.

Margaret Harmon told her the truth, told her why she wanted them and what they would mean to her. She felt she could trust this woman with

the clear gray eyes and the tired, patient face.

She also told her of the strength and unusual talent that lay in her stories; that almost any magazine would gladly take them; and that if she could write up to that standard, it would surely bring her fame. For these five stories no magazine would pay more than she would, for she would give her the highest magazine rate. But if she intended to go on writing—these manuscripts would help her win recognition. As much as she wanted the stories, she felt she could not take them without first telling her this.

But Mrs. Woodard told her with a sad little smile that it had come too late. If she had known this years ago when she wrote them, it might have made a difference. But now she could write no more. It had all burnt out—all the old hopes and enthusiasms. Even the bitterness and disillusionment were gone; they, too, had burnt out. The long, weary years of endurance had left her nothing but a desire for quiet and privacy. Nothing could induce her now to publish those stories under her own name; so she gave them to her freely, to use in any way she wished.

When Margaret Harmon returned a week later she accounted for her absence with a gay little laugh. If there was a false note in it, it was not easily detected. She had been down to a quiet country place she knew of to finish a story. She found that she could not write in the city; perhaps it was the noise and the interruptions.

When he called that evening she gave him a manuscript to read. It was "The Recompense," the story she had decided to publish first. She listened with a strained smile while he told her of its merits. He re-read aloud to her certain passages that he thought very vivid, and dwelt on bits of original phrasing and word pictures.

She felt a wild desire to snatch it from him and tear it to pieces; to cry aloud that she wanted to be admired and loved for herself, for her person-

ality—her eyes, her lips, her voice—because she was young and frail and womanly, and not because of some abstract mental quality that he imagined she possessed.

A few days later she found this letter in her mail:

STANDFORD'S MAGAZINE.
158 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK

Editorial Rooms May 29, 1906.

DEAR MISS HARMON: Accept our most hearty congratulations on your story, "The Recompense." Although the August number was closed, we have opened it to give your story an editorial announcement, so that we can publish it in September.

We feel that this is fully up to the standard of "Anchored." In dramatic conception and vividness of detail it may even surpass it. Albert Brunnel is making the drawings.

We hope you will be able to give us another story very soon. A cheque for "The Recompense" will be mailed to you in a few days.

Very sincerely yours,

W. L. WALKER, Editor.

To Miss Margaret F. Harmon,
The Rockford,
New York.

She felt no thrill of triumph, no sense of elation at the success of her scheme. She was sick of scheming—sick of deceiving. Why should this have been forced upon her? Why should she have to lie and scheme and deceive to hold the love of this man? Why could he not love her for herself? Did she not have enough?

She looked at the women around her—happy women with husbands and children. *They* did not write. It was enough for them to be sweet and dainty and womanly. Why should she be expected to be anything more?

She knew that she had enough within her to make any man happy—a wealth of love, emotion and tenderness; a nature full of keen feeling and sympathy. And yet she was loved for something she did not have, a talent she did not possess.

She brooded over it constantly. It was beginning to affect her health. Daily she grew weaker and more nervous. She had lost all her bright color, and there was a weary, strained

look about her eyes that had not been there before. Obediently she took the tonics and nerve foods the doctors prescribed, but she knew they would do her no good.

He watched over her anxiously, took her for drives in the early morning when the park air was fresh and invigorating, and was constantly sending her fruit and flowers. But they gave her little pleasure. She would lay them aside with a strange, impersonal feeling, as though they had been sent to someone else. She told herself that they *were* sent to someone else—the woman he thought she was, the woman with a great literary talent.

She grew to hate the mention of her work—her stories. She could have shrieked aloud every time he mentioned it—and he talked of it almost constantly. With a good deal of difficulty he had bought for her the original illustrations of "Anchored." And when "The Recompense" was published he secured the drawings for it also. She hated the sight of them all, but she hung them around her study; there was nothing else she could do.

There had been so much discussion about "Anchored," the great Standford prize story, that he subscribed to a clipping bureau and had them collect all the articles and paragraphs that had been written about it.

She wondered wearily how it would all end. She knew she could not stand it much longer. She thought grimly of how she had planned to go to a sanatorium. She would soon be forced to go now. Already the doctors were advising for her a change of scene, absolute rest and quiet.

It was one afternoon when he called and found her unusually pale and listless that he told her of his love. Very gently he urged her to give him the right to take care of her; to take her away to France or Switzerland where she could regain her strength.

He would not ask for much, he pleaded humbly, just the right to take care of her. He would never expect her to give up her work for him. He

recognized her talent, and knew that she would never be content or happy if she did not write. But would she not put her work aside for a while and come away with him; let him take care of her and make her well and strong again?

She leaned back with closed eyes, her hands tightly clasping the arms of the chair. For months she had been longing for this with a feverish, heart-sick yearning. And now that it had come there had come with it a sudden realization that she must put it aside. To be his wife with this between them would mean only a greater misery. The futility of all her deceptions! Why had she not felt before what she felt now—that it could never be?

It was not a matter of conscience, of the moral wrong of her deception. That did not enter into it. It was simply a sudden, overwhelming conviction that she would be wretched—with a wretchedness greater than she had ever known.

Her answer to him was that she never intended to marry. How cheap and melodramatic the words sounded. And when she saw the hurt, hopeless look in his eyes she longed to throw herself in his arms and cry aloud her love for him and her yearning to be his wife. But she only clasped tighter the arms of her chair.

A few moments later she was alone. She threw herself on the couch and burst into hysterical weeping. She buried her face in the pillows to smother the sound and screamed—shrieked. Her rings caught in the lace of her gown. She did not stop to unfasten them, but tore them loose. Then, yielding to some wild, fierce instinct, she caught the lace in both hands and tore it into strips. The soft, thin goods, even the lining underneath—she tore at it all. The sound of tearing silk and lace seemed only to incite her. She caught the frail chain around her neck, jerked it until it broke, then flung it across the room.

It was the uncontrollable, passionate outbreak of the primitive woman, the untamed, savage spirit that lies buried

somewhere in the gentlest woman. And now that it was spent she fell back on the couch, weak and exhausted, sobbing bitterly.

All during the long, sleepless night she lay there. Toward morning she had a high fever. When the daylight made its way in gray streaks from beneath the drawn blinds she sat up and pushed the clinging hair from her hot forehead. She was faint and dizzy and her head throbbed with fever. With an effort she made her way into her bedroom and with weak, tremulous fingers unfastened the torn dress and slipped into a loose *négligée*.

The bed with its unruffled covers lay smooth and inviting before her. She fought against the desire to throw herself upon it.

The torturing thoughts of that sleepless night had brought her to one decision—that she must leave at once, before she saw him again. For she would never again have the courage to put his love aside.

She telephoned down to the clerk for a chambermaid, told him that she was ill, that she was going away and wanted a maid to help her pack.

All morning she lay on the bed while the maid emptied out drawers and wardrobes. The bell-boy brought her trunks from the storeroom, and as they stood around waiting to be packed there seemed to be something gruesome and menacing in their gaping depths. The sickening odor of camphor and tar was almost more than she could bear.

She had eaten no breakfast; it had been sent up to her, but she could not bear the thought of food. Even the sight of the napkin-covered tray was offensive; she told the maid to set it out in the hall.

The fever was increasing, her head throbbed cruelly and a feeling of deathly nausea was surging through her. She had tried to direct the packing at first, but now she left it all to the maid, only answering her questions now and then.

"Those furs? Yes, you can put them in that tray. No, it doesn't

matter about those waists being mussed; you can put them anywhere. You needn't pack that brown hat, Marie. You can have it. Yes, the eau de cologne might break in the trunk. Put it in the hand-bag; I may need it on the train."

It was past noon before all the trunks were packed and strapped. With the aid of the maid she had dressed. A cab and an expressman had been telephoned for. She was waiting for them now, leaning back in a chair with closed eyes, fighting hard against the sickness that seemed every moment to increase.

The maid, a kind-hearted French girl, had protested all morning that mademoiselle was too ill to travel, that she should wait until tomorrow. But she only shook her head.

A sharp ring of the bell.

"That's the man for the trunks, ma'am. Shall I let him take them? Are you well enough to go?"

She nodded and the maid opened the door. A moment's silence, then she heard the maid say awkwardly:

"It's a gentleman—a gentleman to see you, ma'am!"

She started up with a little cry. He was coming toward her. There was a gray, drawn look about his face.

"I learned at the office that you are going away. I did not let them send up my card, for I was afraid you would not see me. And I—I had to see you! I cannot let you go—I cannot do without you!"

He had both her hands in his now, and the tenderness in his voice changed to sharp anxiety.

"Why, you are feverish—you are—Oh, my darling, you have a high fever! What is the matter? Why were you going away like this?" He felt her pulse, her hot, throbbing forehead—then gathering her in his arms he carried her over to the couch.

She made no resistance. The forced strength with which she had gone through the morning seemed suddenly to leave her. The fever that had been fought off so long now claimed her with overpowering faintness. Motionless

she lay there, his voice coming to her vague and faint as though from a great distance. Now he was giving hurried, earnest directions to the maid; now he was telephoning for a doctor and nurse; and now he was bending over her, feeling her pulse and forehead and murmuring words of anxious love.

Three weeks later the fever had passed. For the first time she was sitting up in a great chair by the window. The nurse was reading aloud. She had tried to listen, but now she heard only a pleasant, droning voice as she leaned back and gave herself up to her thoughts.

The soft warm air blew out the curtains from the open window, giving glimpses of the street below. A passing fruit-vender, with his push-cart, was crying out his wares. Some children were playing on the steps of a house opposite, their shrill shrieks and laughter mingling with the noises of the street.

Her thoughts went back over the past three weeks. It had been good to lie there; in spite of the pain and fever, there had been something wonderful in the sheltered, protected feeling that his constant care had given her.

Every day—three or four times a day he had called. Most of the time she had been too ill to be seen, but she knew from the nurse when he came. There had been, too, a rare sense of rest and peace, a feeling that she need do nothing but just lie there and be cared for. Her physical weakness made any effort at thought impossible, and she drifted through the days in a delicious, dreamy languor.

But now that she was better she must take up the struggle again. In a week she would probably be strong enough to travel. Her plan was the same—with one exception. She would tell him before she went. She felt now that she owed him that. She would tell it all—her efforts to follow "Anchored" with other stories; the long weary days she had tortured her brain; the manuscripts that had come from Mary Woodard; her trip to

Tennessee and all that followed—all the details of her deception. And then—he would make no effort to keep her from leaving him. She hid her face with a little moan at the intolerable pain of the thought. The nurse put down her book and came over to her anxiously.

"You are tired. You had better lie down."

But she shook her head. No, she was not tired, only a little nervous, and she would rather not lie down yet.

When he came that afternoon there was something in his joy at finding her sitting up, something in the quiet air of authority with which he spoke to the nurse, and the tender note of possession when he spoke to her, that made her heart beat fast and sent the warm color to her face. She lay back thrilled with the sweetness of it all—of being watched over and cared for by him.

And this was what she was putting out of her life forever. It was this that she was to crush and kill in a way that even the memory of it would be left a poisonous thing. A certain desperate courage came to her—the courage of the end of things. She would not wait until she was leaving. She would tell

him now! Every time he came would only make it harder; every thrill of joy she felt in his nearness would only make keener the misery of leaving.

He was telling her that if she would be very careful now and not overtax her strength, he hoped he could take her out driving next week. She stopped him with a little imperative gesture.

"Listen! I have something to tell you. You must not interrupt me—you must not speak until I have finished."

And then she told him. She kept her head turned away. She did not want to see his face. She finished at last.

There was a moment's silence that seemed to her an eternity. Then he was stooping over her, both her hands in his.

"And you thought it was your work? Oh, my poor darling, how needlessly you have suffered! All the time I have resented your work—have almost hated it in my jealousy. But I thought your whole heart was in it—and that if I won you at all it could only be through your work. But all the time it was you, *you*—just your sweet, gentle womanliness that I loved."



CONSOLING

MRS. CRAWFORD—I'm sick and tired of my husband's dissipation.
MRS. CRABSHAW—No wonder, dear; you are always talking about it.



MAHL—He is a man of letters, is he not?
STICK—Yes—a sign-painter.



"SAY, Smith, does your wife answer to this description?"
"I guess so. My wife answers to everything—every time."

THE VENGEANCE OF VERONIK

By William Hamilton Osborne

EVANGELINE MITCHELTREE shrugged her pretty shoulders, which were bare, and thrust a pink, uncovered foot at Tommy Veronik.

"Tommy," she exclaimed, "I want you to take me in *this* pose—just once." She struck an attitude. "The dancing girl, you see," she pleaded.

Thomas Veronik groaned. For fully fifteen minutes he had been standing, like patience on a monument, by the side of his biggest camera, with the rubber bulb already in his fingers, waiting for the psychological moment to arrive. During all this time he had hurled injunctions by the mouthful at the subject who was posing gracefully before him. And now she had spoiled it all. He dropped the bulb, strode toward her and seized her roughly by the arm.

"Do you not think," he wailed, "that I know my business? You—a dancing girl! You don't understand, my beauty. You shall be a dream and not a dancing girl. Now, once more, little one. Listen. Many a man would have been satisfied long ere this; but not an artist. We almost had it. Once more, come . . ."

Evangeline stood on her pedestal, a slip of a girl, laughing down upon the bushy-headed boy before her. He was so funny, and so fussy, too. She grasped him by the hair.

"Take me this way—once, Tommy," she said again, dropping once more into a pose that for awkwardness was *par excellence*. But Evangeline was not thinking of the grace of her; she had points about her that *must* attract, and this pose of hers would best develop them. Thomas Veronik, escap-

ing from her grasp, strode back to his big camera, and wheeled it back into a corner. Then he sat down upon a stool and folded his arms.

"It is all over, angel," he announced serenely.

She was startled. "Aren't you going to take *any*?" she queried.

"I shall take one," he answered, "my way and not yours."

Whereupon she relented, and the big camera was dragged forth once more, and Thomas Veronik began again the weary work of posing.

"Once more," he said, "those arms, up—up behind the head—so. And the knees crossing each other—so. Shoulders back. Wait."

He approached her, and knelt before her, and threw his arms about her knees. "Just the thing," he smiled. "It takes my clasp to fix them so. Eh?" He looked up into her face. "Angel girl," he said. Then he retreated to his bulb.

"Now," he whispered. Then cooing softly, as a dove might to its mate: "Listen, angel. No, look at me. Don't move. Everything goes just as it is. But I want something from your eyes. They're empty. Look, just a bit of love in your wonderful eyes, dear; just a bit of love—for *me*."

Evangeline responded. The little artist gasped, and, gasping, squeezed the bulb.

"The instant psychological," he whispered to himself. He did not know that the last artistic touch had been added by Evangeline herself. He had been standing jowl to jowl with his camera. And the look with the "love in it" had gone, not into his

soul, but into the depths of the dark camera, where the image of Evangeline at that instant had appeared. It had been a look of love; but it was a look of love for self. Evangeline Mitcheltree had two mottoes hung up in her intellectual attic. One was this: Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. The other was this: The greatest good to the greatest number; the greatest number, Number One. And that last daring glance from the eyes of Evangeline upon the pedestal to the eyes of Evangeline in the camera had these things in it. Yet that glance had fooled Thomas Veronik, or he never would have squeezed the bulb. Later, it had fooled others who glanced upon it, who looked into the depths of it, and wondered why their pulses stirred, why their hearts beat faster.

"Ah," gasped Thomas Veronik, the photographer, "it is wonderful. I knew it would be. Her beauty and my art. It is almost like the wedding, eh? We are one, the angel girl and I . . . one in this wonderful picture."

For weeks he worked over his negative as only a real artist knew how. When he had finished he called in his "angel girl."

"See," he cried, "behold it! It is not you any more. It is 'The Rose Petal,' my child."

Whereupon he kissed her on the cheek. This was a concession on the part of Evangeline, but she scarcely noted the liberty he had taken, for she was amazed at the beauty of herself on paper.

"Tommy," she conceded breathlessly, at last, "you *did* know how."

Daintiness—that was its chief charm. But it was the daintiness of real flesh and blood. The bare shoulders rising above the slender waist possessed form and substance; the bosom was full; the head was a woman's head, with a woman's tilt. And the *eyes!* If it had not been called "The Rose Petal," it might almost have been called "The Lure." And yet it was totally inoffensive. Half nude though it were,

the drapery was absolutely without suggestion—the whole thing was, as Thomas Veronik had dubbed it, the petal of a rose, but . . . come to life.

"This will get me into the magazines," Evangeline told Thomas.

She was right. Tommy made her several prints, and she went in person to dramatic editors.

"I'm so ambitious," she pleaded with them, "and . . ." The first man she struck was adamant, until he saw the picture.

"By Jove!" he said.

Inside of two months that picture in that magazine was on the news-stands, with its significant inscription:

"The Rose Petal": Fanciful pose of Miss Evangeline Mitcheltree, one of the chorus in "The Society Swirl."

This pleased the magazine, the public, the management of "The Society Swirl," and it pleased Evangeline immensely. And in one corner, in very small letters, close to the photograph, there appeared the insignificant words, "Copyright, 1900, by Veronik." A few discriminating photographic artists inquired casually who this Veronik might be. In another month the daily newspapers had reproduced "The Rose Petal," and by early Spring many other poses of Miss Mitcheltree—all by Veronik, had found their way into the public prints. There was one explanation to it all, and that was the sheer beauty of the picture and the sheer beauty of the girl. But behind it was the art of Veronik.

Thomas Veronik was young. His little photographic studio was on Market street, in Monroe, New Jersey. His living was made out of ping-pong pictures and his business devotion to the picture-postal craze. He barely subsisted on his business. Outside of the business end of his occupation, there were two things worth while. One was his art. He reveled in it. Some day the little world of Monroe might wake up and recognize it. But, if it did not, still it was art. That was enough for him. The other thing

worth while was Evangeline Mitcheltree—his Evangeline, so he assured himself. He had met Evangeline on the boardwalk at Asbury Park one day, for the first time. She had gone down on the same excursion as he. He had gone down with a camera. She had taken quick note of that fact, and, at her request, he had snapped her. So she did him the honor of coming on his section, in the same car, in the same seat.

"I might as well jolly him," she told herself, "until he prints the snap shot."

Later, when she found out that he was a professional photographer, she scented possibilities. She was a chorus girl and needed publicity. She, too, was of Monroe. She had struggled into it, somehow. She knew how to work, for she had ambitions that kept her nose to the grindstone. These ambitions. . . . Even as a little girl of eight—a dirty little girl—she had swung upon the low park railings in Monroe, watching the social whirl in Monroe drive about the park. Every day for years she had watched the crowd of big people. She knew them all by name. She devoured the social and personal columns in the local daily papers. That was her world. And, of them all, there was one woman, for whom and for whose name she constantly had been on the lookout. That woman was Mrs. Pallet-Searing, of Monroe, or—pshaw! Mrs. Pallet-Searing, of the United States of America, was just as good. Everybody knew Mrs. Pallet-Searing. But few knew her as Evangeline Mitcheltree knew her—as a dream, a dream of conquest. The ambition of Evangeline Mitcheltree was far-reaching. But there was a point where it stopped. Evangeline could not see beyond Mrs. Pallet-Searing in the social scale. If only she could reach a point where she could have the acquaintance, the friendship, the patronage of Mrs. Pallet-Searing, it would suffice; for that meant the possession of preferred stock in the aristocracy of Evangeline's native town, Monroe. She wanted to belong to the people she had watched.

Bearing this in mind, she had been careful. She had formed few friendships among her own kind. She had done more, she had held her grip firmly upon feminine propriety. The Monroe mashers knew what the New York mashers learned later—that Evangeline Mitcheltree could damn them on the spot with high-bred indifference; could freeze them unaccountably with a frigidity effective but acquired. They left her alone. The path of "The Rose Petal" lay through the Respectable.

Instinct and opportunity had led her, accidentally, before the footlights. The chorus was her limit. She knew it; but she knew also that there was no limit to the lure that was in her eyes. The daily press had taught her, as had the traditions among her kind, that the millionaire knelt at the feet of the chorus girl. And she wanted a millionaire.

"Ah," sighed Thomas Veronik, her photographer lover, "with those eyes of yours, angel, you could have anybody in the world."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, fluttering. She had not acquainted Veronik with her secret longings. She let him kiss her just once more on the cheek.

"Strange," he murmured, "that you should love me so much. What is it they call me?—Ping-Pong Tommy! And yet you do love me, my angel, do you not?"

She did not answer at once. But she glanced down at the impetuous Thomas, who was kneeling before her, and in her fancy, he became transformed into a millionaire. She forgot Thomas Veronik. The strange lure was in her eyes.

"You love me, oh, so much, my rose?" he ventured.

She flushed, thinking of the future.

"Yes, dearest," she murmured softly. And Veronik fell upon his face sobbing for very joy. She had told him with her eyes, so many times, but now, with her voice—those full, deep, gentle tones. Yes, she was putting herself upon record; binding herself, with solemnity, to him. It was good.

"One kiss, then, angel girl, upon the lips." Whereupon the rose hastily drew forth her watch and exclaimed, aghast, "Here I am in Monroe, Tommy, with only an hour and a half to reach the Gaiety in Manhattan. I've got to get a hustle on, boy."

"Not without a kiss upon the lips," he persisted.

She hesitated. But, after all, Tommy was of value to her. It wouldn't do to discourage him too much. Tommy was still pushing good, artistic pictures of her into the public prints of New York.

"Oh, well, then," she assented, "just one. Not more than one."

Tommy took two kisses and dreamed about them for a month. And Evangeline Mitcheltree was well repaid for those two. For their inspiration produced a new artistic pose that made almost as much fame for her as did "The Rose Petal." "The Rainbow" was not so dainty, but it was even more alluring than was "The Rose Petal." And one thing that the new picture did was significant in the extreme. It attracted the attention of Mr. Barton Wilkinson, of Monroe. Mr. Barton Wilkinson, of Monroe, was not a millionaire. But he was the son of a deceased millionaire—Wilkinson, of Wilkinson's Thread Works, of W. W. W. fame.

Mr. Barton Wilkinson had ambitions, too. One of them was to find the prettiest chorus girl in New York. He had been all around the world looking for, and at, pretty women. He had come back to New York.

"Say," said this aristocratic young man to his chum one evening, in Monroe, "come over with me to New York tonight."

"What for?"

"Society Swirl."

"N. G.," said the other; "I've seen it."

"You only think you have," returned the wilful Wilkinson. He opened a magazine and flattened it on his knee. "Have you seen *that*?" he queried.

His chum gazed upon "The Rain-

bow" with delight. "Come on," he said, "we'll go."

They went, occupying a stage box. In vain did Mr. Wilkinson try his usual tactics. Evangeline Mitcheltree, of the chorus, sang and danced within ten feet of Mr. Wilkinson. But he might just as well have been ten miles off, for all she cared. He went home, dejected and morose. But that night he cut out of the magazine the picture of "The Rainbow," and pinned it on the wall, at the head of all his beauties.

"Oh, well," he sighed, "there's plenty of time—there's lots of time, you know."

It took him three weeks to get an introduction to Miss Mitcheltree of "The Society Swirl." He had his difficulties in getting it. He knew other chorus girls in the company, but Evangeline would not stand for any introduction through them. This was her first chance; she never let a first chance slip by; it was a good chance, too, and it must be taken *right*. She knew.

Her cool rebuffs shocked Barton Wilkinson as might a plunge into an icy bath. But, like such plunges, they only stirred his blood. *This* girl was different, she was refreshing. He made progress; at the end of three months he had been permitted to kiss the tip ends of her fingers once, to squeeze them twice. That was ecstasy divine.

One day Evangeline Mitcheltree swept into Tommy Veronik's new studio on Main street, in Monroe. It was afternoon, but she was clad in evening dress. Tommy gasped. The gown had been built along his ideas; he had dictated, planned it. But he was unprepared for the vision that stood before him. . . . Evangeline was magnificent now where before she had been but lovely. Tommy trembled. He was almost afraid.

"Tommy," she commanded, "I want you to take me just once, *this* way. This," she added, "is *not* for publication, Tommy."

Tommy stood with his hands hanging at his side. He made no move.

"Well?" she asked.

He nodded. "On one condition," he returned, "shall I take you. We have loved long enough apart. Now we should marry. On one condition: you shall name the day."

She flushed, purposely. She thought rapidly. She must hold her grip on Tommy until she needed him no more. She would need him—his art was making her, had made her—until Wilkinson was in the meshes for good and all. Then . . .

Tommy Veronik forgot that she was Evangeline, the magnificent. His eyes were on the future. He stretched out his arms and stepped forward to gather her in. She uttered a shriek.

"Tommy, Tommy!" she yelled. "No, take the picture first. I must not be mussed."

He remembered. He stepped back. He waited for her to name the day. She named it.

"The first Wednesday in June," she told him.

He took the picture—"Of a Queen," he whispered to himself. Then, when it was over, he threw his arms about her, and kissed her, wildly, deliriously. And—she let him do it, too.

The picture was for Barton Wilkinson. Wilkinson got it. He got something else. He got Evangeline Mitchell.

"When shall we marry, dearest?" asked Wilkinson of her.

She thought for an instant. "The first Wednesday in June," she conceded, finally.

That was all; all, except that a bushy-headed, tear-stained little fellow in Monroe lay writhing in a corner of his studio on Main street, clasping, not Evangeline in his arms, but only in his hand a sheet of scented letter-paper—her cold, contemptuous, patronizing farewell to him. Finally, where he had dropped down on the floor, a boy, he rose a man.

"All right, my angel," he said, with set jaw. "I have left my art. Art is long, eh? Life is fleeting, eh? . . . Somehow, maybe things will even up. We'll see . . . we'll see, my angel girl. We'll see."

Veronik held his nose to the grindstone. His business had increased. He was making money, living easily, branching out. For years on Market street, his business had been among the ragtag-and-bobtail. But now ping-pongs were a thing of the past, and he bade the picture-postal card adieu. And one day a portly woman stepped across his threshold.

"Mr. Veronik," she said, "I've tried every photographer in New York and every one in Monroe but you. None of them can suit me. Now, I'm going to try *you*, to see what *you* can do."

She tried him. She was there for an hour. She did just what he told her. After fifty minutes of adjustment of light and shade . . . fifty minutes of careful study on the part of the bushy-haired artist, he lifted up his hand, bade the woman look at it, and then pressed the bulb. The photograph was a success: as much of a success as was the woman. And the woman certainly was a success, for she was Mrs. Pallet-Searing, of Monroe. From the instant that her new art photograph appeared upon her little teakwood stand—a photograph with the name of Veronik boldly outlined in lead pencil upon it—from that instant the art of Veronik became recognized in Monroe; already it had been recognized by the photographic artists of New York, by grace of "The Rose Petal" and "The Rainbow." He enlarged his studio still more. He married his pretty, young assistant; he had to marry somebody, for he was a marrying man. He bought a house and settled down. His art had become a steady, money-making business.

Mr. Barton Wilkinson addressed Mrs. Barton Wilkinson, *née* Mitchell. "My dear," he said, "we shall take an apartment on the Drive, here in Manhattan."

Mrs. Wilkinson only smiled. "My dear," she answered, "we shall go back to Monroe, and open your old homestead. That's what we'll do, my dear."

"Old homestead!" he gasped, "Monroe! What do you know about Monroe and my old homestead?"

"I was born and brought up in Monroe," she told him. He shivered. He had not known this. He didn't like it. It was like marrying a girl one had known all one's life. It took the edge off his ardor somehow.

"What part of Monroe did you live in?" he asked of her.

"In Canal street," she answered simply, which, in Monroe, meant, literally, the gutter. Canal street was down neck. Down neck was gehenna.

"We'll go back to Monroe," she said. They went back. It was the fourth step in Evangeline's progress. Her first had been the footlights; her second, Veronik; her third, her marriage; something more than the thin edge of the wedge, all this. And now, "Give me a foothold in Monroe," she had told herself. Well, these things had given her the foothold. The rest was easy. Her beauty, her gentleness, her daintiness of manner would do the rest. She had dreamed of the patronage of Mrs. Pallet-Searing. She dreamed now of equality; more, she dreamed of superiority. The day was to come when Evangeline Mitcheltree, and not Mrs. Pallet-Searing, would lead the social set in Monroe. She felt it in her bones.

She had miscalculated to some slight extent. Aristocracy in Monroe did not depend entirely upon blood. If you were respectable and had money, you were all right. But respectability was an essential. Indeed, the wall motto of society in Monroe might well have been these words: Church and Coin. The good rich were the winners in Monroe. Barton Wilkinson couldn't qualify. He was rich, but he hadn't been good. Theoretically, he was of the set in Monroe; logically, he belonged as his father had belonged before him. But the fault was his; he had drifted away, had closed his big house, lived at his club, cut teas and receptions, ignored dinners and theatre parties, and had traveled the path, rosy red, of wayward youth,

until Evangeline had laid him low. Ignoring people of his own kind, he had come to be ignored. When he came back with his young wife and opened up his house there was no place for him. People didn't even know whom he married. They didn't care. However, there was another reason why they didn't know. Evangeline Mitcheltree Wilkinson had burned her bridges behind her. She had entered into a solemn compact with her husband that her antecedents should be shrouded in gloom. They had spent a month on their wedding trip in old Boston, and she was prepared to talk glibly of that town. She had hoped that she could effectually kick the ladders by which she had climbed into the deep, dark abyss below. All the while bushy-headed Veronik looked on, licking his chops.

"Vengeance!" cried Veronik, within himself.

Well, the unexpected happened. Mrs. Pallet-Searing watched with interest the opening of the old Wilkinson homestead, and once or twice she saw Bart's young wife on the broad veranda.

"I always liked Bart," Mrs. Pallet-Searing told herself, though she had frequently condemned him for breaking all the commandments all the time, "and—I'll see."

Without notice, she called on Evangeline one day; took her completely by surprise. She didn't know that Evangeline never could be taken by surprise. Evangeline was fixed for her this time. Evangeline was clad in linen, her sleeves rolled up, her collar turned down, helping the maids hang the old, yellow, time-worn Wilkinson curtains in the music-room. She was girlish, she was winning.

She won Mrs. Pallet-Searing. She knew she would. "Give me a foothold," she had said. Mrs. Pallet-Searing was charmed, and said as much to her closest friends.

"I don't know where Bart Wilkinson ever got such a dainty little creature," said Mrs. Pallet-Searing. "And it isn't all daintiness—it's solid beauty.

Her face—why, Marion, I've never seen such a face, never. It's unlike the face of any other girl. I never could forget it. And her eyes——"

But Mrs. Pallet-Searing was cautious, wary. She never made mistakes. And she did what she pleased, especially with new people. She was always testing them, always putting them through an unconscious examination, and at the last minute, when they were sure of a card to her reception, she would turn her back upon them as completely as though they had disappeared from view. She had weighed and found them wanting, that was all.

"I suppose," sighed Mrs. Pallet-Searing to herself, "that this girl is like all the rest."

But Evangeline didn't seem to be. Wherever they met, in the market, in the Green Store, or on the County Park drive, young Mrs. Wilkinson lived up to her colors. The charm, the strange lure of her voice, her eyes—they were irresistible.

Evangeline worked hard. For at the end of a long road she was sure that she saw what she wanted—one of Mrs. Pallet-Searing's dinner parties, a small one, just twenty-five or thirty, with herself, Evangeline, sitting on Mrs. Pallet-Searing's right hand, the guest of honor. Why, Mrs. Pallet-Searing had even hinted at it. Evangeline plunged into church work. She exerted herself. And every now and then she peered down into the abyss to see if all her ladders had disappeared from sight. They had.

It was several months after Bart Wilkinson had purchased his new Mastodon, of the vintage of 1907—a big machine of cobalt-blue—that young Mrs. Barton Wilkinson sat at the wheel one momentous day, and started off, alone. She often ran alone. Perhaps, too, there was a method in this. Often had she seen Mrs. Pallet-Searing, from her house opposite, watching her as she sped noiselessly in the distance. This time she did more than see.

She heard—heard Mrs. Pallet-Sear-

ing's matronly voice call to her from across the way.

"Oh, Mrs. Wilkinson!"

Evangeline looked. The matron was well cloaked, and her hat was well tied down with expensive gauze. She bustled over, beaming. Evangeline brought the big car to a standstill.

Mrs. Pallet-Searing laughed gaily. "I've been waiting for an invitation," said Mrs. Pallet-Searing, "and it didn't come. May I hook on behind?"

Evangeline cast a lustrous glance toward the social leader. "Dear me," she said, "I didn't suppose you cared. Wait. Now get in."

"I've heard about the Mastodon," returned the matron, "and I've been pestering Mr. Pallet-Searing to get one. I did so want to try it."

"If I only had known," murmured Evangeline. She turned her wheel and the big machine leaped forward. Out through the County Drive they bounded, and back through the boulevard.

"Do you know, my dear," gasped Mrs. Pallet-Searing, between swift drives, "that I wanted to see you, and talk about it. I was thinking—just thinking, don't you know; I haven't planned a thing—of a dinner, a little, cozy dinner, with you and some women friends I want you to meet, and . . ."

Evangeline's heart beat with joy; but she gave no sign. She even interrupted Mrs. Pallet-Searing in the middle of her recital.

"What's that?" she asked, bringing her car to a dead stop.

She had pointed to a sign-board. On the sign-board were displayed theatrical posters of some local concert hall. There were possibly a dozen dancers depicted on the sign, in tights. But, from one end of the board to the other there ran a plain white strip of paper, ruining the effect, disfiguring the poster.

"What does it mean?" asked Evangeline.

"Oh," answered Mrs. Pallet-Searing, "it means that Ephraim Carnaby has been at work again."

"Who is Ephraim Carnaby?" asked

Evangeline. She knew well who he was, the crank of Monroe, the arbiter of the town's morals, the regulator of decency. Mrs. Pallet-Searing dwelt upon him.

"Before he began to cover up these tights and things," she said, "nobody noticed them. Now everybody looks at them. That white strip of paper is more suggestive than a thousand pairs of tights could be. He carries things too far, we think. . . . Come on. There, there's another. Look at that. And that—why, they're all over in Monroe! . . . Well, I never! Look at that. Nothing but a baby, too. Well, what are we coming to? Look at those stays. What harm—? Oh, Mrs. Wilkinson, isn't this car of Bart's just glorious! I'm going to have a Mastodon, 1907, if it takes a leg . . . er . . . er . . . branch, I suppose I ought to say. I hope old Carnaby didn't hear me then. . . . Oh-h-h-h-h!"

"Oh-h-h!" yelled Evangeline in unison.

This time their cries were earnest. The Mastodon had kicked hard. There had been a bump, three little lurches to one side, and then, suddenly, the cobalt-blue machine had leaped into the air on all fours; had come down with a terrific jolt, and then had . . . stopped. The women sat there, frightened for an instant; then Evangeline spoke.

"You won't think so much of the Mastodon now," she suggested.

She tried to start it up again, but it wouldn't go. "Something has got jammed, I'm afraid," she said. Neither knew much about the intestinal formation of machines. In half an hour the Mastodon, stolid as ever, had tired them out. They looked about them. They were on the outskirts of town, on an unfrequented road. They looked up and down; there was no vehicle, no pedestrian. They got out and rested, sitting on rails.

Suddenly Mrs. Pallet-Searing gasped again. "Well, I never!" she exclaimed. "If Ephraim Carnaby hasn't been at work 'way out here. Just look!"

December, 1906-6

Seventy-five feet away, just across the road, was a sign, a big sign, vaster than any that, so far, they had passed. It was not a theatrical poster. It was a business advertisement.

"Why didn't he cover up the pig?" laughed Mrs. Pallet-Searing.

For the first time Evangeline glanced at the big sign. At its top, in letters a foot high, appeared the words, "HELMSTAEDTER'S HAMS AND BACON." To the left was a goodly porker, scrubbed as clean and white as newly gathered cream. He was alive, standing squarely on his four feet, with a wonderful twist to his tail. Stamped upon his broad side was the circular trade-mark of Helmstaedter, the ham and bacon man. But it was not the name or the trade-mark or the porker that attracted Evangeline's attention. There was still another figure. To the right, facing the porker, was a girl, a wonderful girl, with her hands raised above her head, her figure thrown well against the background, with the lure of woman in her eyes.

"The Rose Petal," she murmured in astonishment. But Mrs. Pallet-Searing didn't hear her.

"See what it says underneath," said Mrs. Pallet-Searing; "see, 'ONE IS AS DAINTY AS THE OTHER.' Clever, isn't it? One, the ham and the bacon, is as dainty as the other, the girl. And such a girl, such a dainty girl! Why did they ever cover her up, I wonder?"

They hadn't done it very well. The white rectangle of paper had slipped, by accident or design of the moral billboard. It had been intended to cover the girl from neck to ankle. But there was a seductive bit of gleaming shoulder visible, and just enough of shapely calf to make one wish for more. It was tantalizing. And yet, after all, that white rectangle was a marvel as an attracter of attention. It had not pleased Helmstaedter, however, for over the white paper he had placed a small printed notice: "This poster in miniature, and UNMUTILATED, will be mailed on application."

"The whole thing," said Mrs. Pallet-

Searing, "is *so* artistic, so pretty, so dainty, so—so—"

Then for the first time, she glanced *squarely* at the face—a face not to be forgotten, a face of its own kind.

She flushed, stammered. Then she glanced coldly into the eyes of Evangeline Mitcheltree Wilkinson.

"Why . . . why . . . " she began. She looked swiftly from the counterfeit presentment to the individual, and back again. Every detail, every feature, every bit of expression, had been reproduced.

"I . . . don't . . . quite . . . understand," gasped Mrs. Pallet-Searing, faintly, reaching for her smelling-salts. "I . . . "

Somehow, they got back into town. Evangeline didn't remember until later just how the journey had been accomplished. Then she recalled that some old-time machine had towed them back; that they had gone slowly, so very slowly that they had had time to read and enjoy at least seven more of the Helmstaedter advertisements. She remembered that one of them had been reversed, reading, "One—the girl—is as dainty as the other—the pig."

It was at that point that Mrs. Pallet-Searing had begun to talk through frozen teeth. And then, the *eighth*—ah, the eighth, that Ephraim Carnaby had overlooked, the one *without* the white rectangle. Dainty, delicate, charming, artistic—yes, glorious, under ordinary circumstances, but hardly so when the original of the picture was the woman sitting at your side.

It was at that point that Mrs. Pallet-Searing froze all over. Evangeline trembled, but she thought perhaps the wedge might sink in deeper yet. She thought that Mrs. Pallet-Searing had pledged herself somehow.

"You spoke about—a dinner," she ventured faintly, when she set Mrs. Pallet-Searing down at her doorstep.

Mrs. Pallet-Searing looked up the street and down the street. Then she looked *squarely* into the eyes of Evangeline Wilkinson.

"What . . . dinner?" she asked coldly. Then, as only Mrs. Pallet-Sear-

ing knew how to do, Mrs. Pallet-Searing turned her back.

Barton Wilkinson winced under the storm that he encountered that evening when he came home to his young wife. She had wept for hours. He heard her through.

"So it was Veronik," he said at last, "Veronik, here in town, eh? Well, he had no right, of course. We'll sue him. We'll smash him. We'll do anything you say."

"T-t-that won't wipe out the disgrace," she sobbed in return.

Oh, it was a disgrace! There was no doubt about it. And it didn't stop with Helmstaedter and "The Rose Petal"—not by a long shot. The W. T. Company brought out "The Rainbow" next, in vivid colors, having for its background three different models of the W. T. C. Straight Front. There was no end to it. Veronik had taken Evangeline in one hundred and ten poses. Twenty of these found their way upon the Monroe bill-boards before Evangeline's grief gave way to action.

One day in Lent she descended upon Veronik's art studio on Main street. He was not there. He had gone home, the buttons told her. She went to his home—a stylish brownstone house overlooking the park, for he had prospered. She saw his wife.

"It's about time Mr. Veronik wrote me an answer to my letter," burst forth Evangeline. "I wrote him about this poster business. It must stop. Where is he? I must see him."

Veronik's pretty wife clasped her hands. "Oh," she squealed, "it is you who are the lucky one! Oh, how I should like to have *myself* in all the magazines, and on all the fences. It is so grand, to be so great." She meant it. She envied this beauty that had made the advertisers sit up and think.

"Doesn't he dare to show his face?" demanded Evangeline.

"Pardon, madame," said Veronik's wife—a little French girl she was, "a thousand pardons—he is away—out."

"Where?"

"At Madame Pallet-Searing's—such a good customer of his. There he can be found."

"What is he there for?" gasped Evangeline.

Madame Veronik bowed. "He lectures before Madame Pallet-Searing's dear, dear friends on 'What Is Decency in Art?' It is such a good subject. Local just now, but so good. . . . 'What Is Decency in Art?' Eh?"

She was right. Even at that moment Thomas Veronik, artist and photographic expert, was standing before a few of the F. F. V.'s of Monroe, holding up before them the picture of a charming, graceful, half-nude figure.

"Could anything be more modest?" he inquired. Whereupon they nudged one another.

"It's Mrs. Barton Wilkinson," they whispered. "It's called 'The Rose Petal.' It was taken when she was a chorus girl in 'The Society Swirl' over in New York."

Evangeline had told the wife of Veronik that she had written him a letter. When she arrived at home that afternoon she found his answer to it. And when Barton Wilkinson arrived home that evening he still found her in tears.

"Well," he asked, "did you eat him up?"

"You read," she said, tossing the letter to him.

He read it. This is what it said:

DEAR MADAM: Yours of the 3d received and contents noted. This last letter of

yours reminds me of your first. You will recall the circumstances. You were to marry me on the first Wednesday in June, so very long ago. You did not marry me. Instead you left me in the lurch. Here's the very note. This is what you wrote:

"DEAR TOMMY: I am marrying Mr. Wilkinson today. I cannot help it. I have given my heart to him. As for you, you may keep my photographs. I have no further use for them. Do with them what you will."

Madame, this is the first opportunity I have had to thank you. I have the photographs. I have use for them. I am doing with them what I will. But mark you, I have not finished. I have just begun.

Respectfully,

T. VERONIK.

P. S. Next Tuesday I lecture once more at Mrs. Pallet-Searing's on "The Use of Art Effect in Commerce." I hope you will be there.

While Barton Wilkinson read, the weeping of his wife increased.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, of course," she wailed, "I won't be there."

"That isn't the point," he answered. "This fellow's got you. You gave him the photographs, didn't you, to do with as he pleased? How are you going to stop him, Vangie? How are we going to do it?"

Evangeline Wilkinson wiped her eyes.

"You don't see the point," she exclaimed, blowing her nose dejectedly.

"What is it?"

"Why," she answered, her grief breaking out violently once more, "I might just as well have married Veronik."

"It would have served him right," said Wilkinson, moodily tapping the inside of an empty card-receiver.



HIS LONG CAREER

"HAS he been writing poetry long?"

"Gad, yes! Why, he owes money to over forty landladies."



IT is true enough that money talks—but then, it stops talk, too.

THE HALF-BREED GIRL

By Duncan Campbell Scott

SHE is free of the trap and the paddle,
The portage and the trail,
But something behind her savage life
Shines like a fragile veil.

Her dreams are undiscovered,
Shadows trouble her breast;
When the time for resting cometh
Then least is she at rest.

Oft in the morns of Winter
When she visits the rabbit snares,
An appearance floats in the crystal air
Beyond the balsam firs.

Oft in the Summer mornings
When she strips the nets of fish,
The smell of the dripping net-twine
Gives to her heart a wish.

But she cannot learn the meaning
Of the shadows in her soul,
The lights that break and gather,
The clouds that part and roll;

The reek of rock-built cities
Where her fathers dwelt of yore,
The gleam of loch and shealing,
The mists on the moor;

Frail traces of kindred kindness,
Of feud by hill and strand,
The heritage of an age-long life
In a legendary land.

She wakes in the stifling wigwam,
Where the air is heavy and wild;
She fears for something or nothing
With the heart of a frightened child.

She sees the stars turn slowly
Past the tangle of the poles,
Through the smoke of the dying embers,
Like the eyes of dead souls.

Her heart is shaken with longing
For the strange, still years,
For what she knows and knows not,
For the wells of ancient tears.

A voice calls from the rapids,
Deep, careless and free—
A voice that is larger than her life
Or than her death shall be.

She covers her face with her blanket,
Her fierce soul hates her breath,
As it cries with a sudden passion
For life—or death.



LONGING

MISS SOULFUL—Did you ever long for death?
MR. HARD—Many times—for my rich uncle's.



THE HEIGHTS OF HAPPINESS

"IS Belle happily married?"
"Very. Her husband is healthy, wealthy and—foolish."



AT THE MUSICALE

CLARA—She puts lots of feeling into her singing, doesn't she?
FERDY—Yes; but it must be awful to feel that way.



A WOMAN'S past is always present.

GOD'S FREEMAN

By Grace MacGowan Cooke

"YOU can stand where you are, or come in and sit in the entry," said the woman ungraciously, wiping her wet hands on her checked apron.

The three tall men, two of them in clerical black, shouldered uneasily together on the rear stoop of a Back Bay mansion. They looked at the woman before them, uncompromising, inhospitable, and then at each other. The larger minister, a stout man with smooth, long oval cheeks, who gave an impression of baldness because he was not hirsute, began in the placatory voice one uses to a hysterical, recalcitrant child:

"My name is Morton—the Rev. James Morton, of Eccles Place Church; and this"—indicating the smaller man—"is my colleague, Rev. Mr. Sinnet, of the Pine Street Mission. We called, Mrs. Adamson, with your husband. He—he asked us, in fact."

The third man cast an appealing glance from behind the black-clad figures.

"I supposed he'd get some preachers to come and labor with me," said the woman in the doorway in a colorless voice. "But I shouldn't be able to receive you at all, only that the family is away. I expect you'd better get your talk over as soon as possible—I have some work to do this morning."

The second minister, a slight, nervous-looking man, examined Mrs. Adamson pathetically. A tall woman she was, with well-cut features and smoldering dark gray eyes. Her hair was black. She might have been handsome in more favorable circumstances, but such beauty as she had was not insistent

enough to overcome the blue print dress and apron of a cook.

"My time isn't my own, understand," she said finally, after waiting vainly to have them begin the business upon which they had come. "I'm hired here, and my employers don't expect me to have visitors of a morning."

The man who had first spoken found in her words the desired opening. "That's just what we want to talk to you about," he began, with the suave persuasiveness of a book agent. "You can't be comfortable here. A—a lady—used, as your husband tells us, to your own servants—working in a kitchen. It's—it's unthinkable. There must be some way——"

He ran into a sandbank of silence, and for the first time the woman smiled. It was not a hopeful smile. She looked kindly but sadly at the three men, sighed, as a person sighs who is about to inflict himself with that which he knows to be useless and wearying, and said, not unkindly, "It would have been better for John if he could have taken my word for it—as I gave it to him, plainly and finally, yesterday—and gone back home."

The shorter minister fumbled with his gloves in silence. John Adamson turned and looked out over the rooftops, with eyes that saw nothing. But a flush mounted to the fair, well-nourished, long, obstinate cheek of their spokesman.

"I understand," he opened sonorously, "that you and your husband have lived together in the truest conjugal affection for seventeen years."

There was something unintentionally derisive in the bow with which she

acknowledged this. The other visitor made a movement to interrupt, but the stout man went on: "You have a good home—a handsome home. Your husband makes an ample income. Of late years Mr. Adamson tells me that you have kept two servants—two servants. You have children to whom you both are devoted——"

The woman's hold upon the door-knob wavered. She looked down. Then catching the eye of the little white-haired minister who edged nearer as though he would have proffered a hand, she interrupted the rather pompous arraignment, quietly but strongly: "I love my husband and children. I have been a good wife—I am a good wife. I'm sorry John couldn't take his answer yesterday."

The speaker, plainly irritated by her interpolation, hurried on to the statement which should have precluded such a speech from her. "You came to Boston to the meeting of this society belonging to your church—Mr. Adamson brings me a letter from the minister telling me that you have been a good worker and a consistent member of his fold. When you have been in Boston three days Mr. Adamson gets a telegram that you are sick in a hospital, but he is not to come on as it is nothing serious. Next comes the word that you are dead; and your clothing of any value, your watch, your return ticket, and the remains of such money as you took with you, are shipped home to him to prove it. Naturally, he feels that there is something strange—something not right in the whole matter; and he hastens to Boston dreading, at the least, to find you in your grave. But upon inquiries and investigations he discovers a worse thing—you here, a servant working for hire, and refusing to go back with him."

There was a long silence, while the sunlit air came across the level lands below them, and stirred the hair upon John Adamson's forehead; thick, stiff-growing hair beginning to be gray. He looked at his wife with pained, bewildered eyes. He glanced at the spokesman gratefully—it all sounded

so convincing when a preacher said it. Yet he had urged much more than this on Mary yesterday, only to have her, when all had been said, stubbornly maintain her right to silence upon the subject of her plans and intentions.

"Well!" She spoke finally with a note of impatience in her voice. "All you say is exactly true, sir. I was wrong to send those lying telegrams; but at the time I thought it was the only way. I see now that I should have had the courage to face my husband and tell him how I felt and what I meant to do."

"Mary," asked Adamson huskily, "are you going to leave me?"

Again the woman smiled. "I've already left you, John," she replied kindly.

"But—why—why—why? How have I offended?" he burst out, despite a warning gesture from the little old minister beside him. "Are you never coming back? Tell me. I'll do everything you say. I—what is it, Mary? For God's sake, what does all this mean?"

"I don't want you to do anything," his wife said wearily. "I told you yesterday that all I asked was to be let alone. I know it's a crazy thing for any woman to expect—it's a man's privilege. If you'd wanted to come to Boston and go into any sort of business—even to hire out as a waiter in a hotel—you could have done so; I'd certainly never have dared to get two preachers to go and argue with you about it. I left nobody, no duty, which suffered because of my absence. I arranged things so you could be perfectly comfortable; the boys are in a boarding-school where you put them—you're boarding, yourself—why shouldn't I go where I please and do what I please, and no questions asked, so long as my behavior is decent?"

"But this," broke in the larger minister, with a comprehensive and eloquent look about him, "while you would appear to have called it decent, is certainly not seemly. If you were out of health and wanted—ah—recreation, Mr. Adamson tells me that he

would willingly have paid your board at an expensive sanatorium, or sent you to visit relatives, or any of the various things which—ladies—do under such circumstances."

"I am as well as an ox," said the woman with bald brusqueness. "Do you think anybody who wasn't strong and well could do the work here? I had no wish to visit relatives—on John's money—and because John said so."

The listener's face became severe. "Paul tells us that wives should be subject to their husbands," he was beginning weightily, when the woman sharply interrupted:

"Don't quote Paul to me. Haven't I studied my Bible? Haven't I been many a night on my knees praying the Lord to show me a way out? Paul! And doesn't Paul say to them that are in slavery that when the truth comes to them they are God's freemen? Women are the only slaves left in this Western world—that is, women who don't have to work and help earn the living—I guess *they* are full partners with their husbands—I remember that I used to be when we labored together and saved and planned, always together. Well, the truth came to me, and I'm God's freeman—that's what I am. I see it scares you, and you're not willing to stand up to what your Bible says. But I'm doing no wrong nor harm—I'm only taking the freedom God meant every soul to have that was big enough to hold His truth."

Adamson bent forward and plucked at the tall preacher's sleeve. "Don't say any more to her," he uttered in a strangled whisper. "She talked to me like that yesterday. I didn't suppose she'd speak so to you gentlemen. I—we—let's just go."

The Reverend Morton drew back willingly. To him there was no indecency so great as that of disturbing the conventional surface of life, taking off its swaddling, misleading clothes—even to wash it. But Mr. Sinnet, the mild little man who had heretofore taken no part in the discussion, now came forward and faced the situation as one who fancied that he had a clue.

"What did you think to gain by this action, Mrs. Adamson?" he asked gently. "We understand that you love your family"—the Rev. James Morton snorted in denial of any responsibility for this. "In that case you have given up a great deal—what were you to gain?"

The woman choked on her answer; his gentleness seemed more than she could bear. "My soul," she said between her teeth. "A chance to live my own life—a choice—a decision—not to have everything inspected, and pulled over, chosen and decided, before it came to me."

The two other men looked merely bewildered; but little Mr. Sinnet stood his ground, remonstrating kindly, "My dear sister—my dear child; that falls to us everywhere. We must be infringed upon more or less by the lives of other people. Your time is not your own—you have no refined seclusion—here."

With a bleak smile she threw the door wider, saying only, "I will show you my room. Perhaps when you see it you will understand a little more about the strength of my resolution."

Hats in their hands, they stumbled in her wake up the narrow, ill-lighted back-stairs; there was an elevator—but not for the use of the servants. Breathless they reached the garret story and were shown into a small, dark, unfinished room, in disorder, containing two cots and a few pieces of broken-down furniture. "I never have time to clean it," she explained quietly, "till after I'm done my work; and often I'm so tired then that I crawl into my bed as it was left. The Irish laundress shares the room with me—a good-hearted soul, and well enough if she wouldn't drink."

John Adamson reddened with shame.

His wife stood in the middle of the squalid room and went on: "When the family is here I have to get up about five o'clock to prepare the servants' breakfast. We eat then; two men and four women. The family breakfasts any time from nine o'clock on, and I'm kept going pretty hard till three.

Then I'm supposed to have an hour to myself. It is my own—I can demand it—and I usually come up here and lie down, unless there's a big dinner on hand and I'm concerned about my own part of the preparations for it. At such times I never get through till half-past ten or eleven o'clock, but it's interesting work, things I can excel at, well paid—and it's *my* work—the work I chose—not that thrust upon me—expected—demanded of me."

Even the timid, sympathetic little Mr. Sinnet was daunted. Mary Adamson looked at the shamefaced men with something that might almost have been called a sort of fierce gusto.

"It's a riddle—my leaving a"—she glanced fleetingly at the Reverend Morton—"a good home, a handsome home, to come here and take up with a lot like this—is it?" she inquired. "Well, I'll give you the answer—a woman would know without telling, but I doubt if you're any the wiser for it—being men. If I don't like this place I can leave it tomorrow; and," bitterly, "no committee of preachers will come inquiring why I did so. I'm told that I can get places where I shall be much better situated; but this position is well paid; and I could not wait; I had to take up with what I could get at the moment. I am laying by money. After a time I can seek a better situation, I can travel, I can order my life, moderately, as I please. But the thing which makes my present arrangement an improvement upon what my husband asks me to return to, is that I can put on my hat and walk out of this house and never turn my head over my shoulder to look back at it. My body is thrall to this place—not my soul. Here I am accountable for my time, for not even my actions so much as my results, and from day to day; there at home with John I was answerable for all that, and for my very thoughts, prejudices, preferences—even my imaginings and vague desires; a prisoner, in some sense a culprit and with no prospect of any release or reprieve." She herded the three men toward the

door. "I stood it as long as I could—and then I died! John's mistake was in refusing to let me *stay* dead."

As they found their way out the tall man missed his footing and barely saved himself from a fall by an undignified scramble. This appeared to jar into action a latent wrath against the moving cause of his presence in the place.

"This is not a question for us, Mr. Adamson," he said testily. "What you need is a physician. There is mental unsoundness there," he nodded sharply backward, "if not actual mental alienation. I should advise you—" his concluding words were lost as he hurried through the door.

Adamson detained the other visitor in the entry, to ask feverishly, "Do you think she's crazy, too?"

The little old gentleman shook his head. "It is her heart and soul that are in rebellion—not her mind," he said thoughtfully.

"Shall we go back?" debated Adamson in intense distress. "Will you say to her just what you said then to me—that her heart and soul are all wrong, if she persists in this monstrous behavior?"

The white-haired minister drew back, pulling his sleeve from the man's grasp and straightening his arms down at his sides. "You can't see the indecency of thrusting yourself upon your wife, in this mood of hers—never mind whether it's right or wrong, justified or unjustified—and with two preachers to help you?" he asked in a thin, little, musing voice. "Why, sir, the fact that you do this—that you insist upon it, and would desire to go further with it—explains to me her own strange course, more than all that poor woman herself tried to say. My good man, let her alone—for a time, anyhow. To pursue her now—and you in your present frame of mind—can accomplish no good whatever, and may be productive of much harm."

"But what am I to do? What am I to do?" importuned Adamson. "A man—a husband—a loving husband, who has never shown her anything

but devotion—can't leave her like this."

"Do?" sighed Mr. Sinnet. "Do nothing—if you have the self-control. And if you have not, sir, why, I suppose you must do as the spirit moves you. We all have to work out our sins and follies," he murmured as he passed on down the steps. "And often when people seem to be doing the worst, they are actually coming nearest to a decent solution."

II

"MARY, there's a loidy upstairs a-wantin' to see ye. Why did I take her in up there?" in answer to an annoyed exclamation from the other. "Because it'll do no harm with you an' me the only humans in the house. Lord God! what's the differ if you have your company in the lobby, or I stop a minute at the sideboard, the way we work, and that wummun off gaddin' for her own pleasure?"

Mary Adamson removed the flour from her hands and smoothed her hair a bit. She was looking physically better than she had a week ago. There was a tinge of color in her thin cheek that added luster to the eyes above it. To the caller sitting in the lobby in the uniform of a nurse she came as a revelation. Instinctively the new-comer got to her feet. She had prematurely gray hair, an unhealthy complexion, neurotic eyes too big for her face, and a thin, twisted mouth and chin.

"I am Miss Culberson—Rhoda Culberson," she said, a bit falteringly—"a probationer—a nurse, you know—from the Armitage Hospital." She looked at the woman before her in the blue print gown, and the same hostility which had mastered the Rev. James Morton stirred within her.

"Well?" prompted Mary, with a look equally cold. She guessed the nurse's errand.

"Your husband is at the Armitage, very ill. He was brought to us from his hotel, where he was found, half-

dressed and unconscious, on the floor of his room. He has lain in a state of coma for five days now. It is a complete nervous collapse."

"Did he send you for me?" asked Mrs. Adamson.

"No. Don't I tell you he is insensible? Perhaps you didn't understand. His condition is most serious. He will probably regain consciousness just before he dies. I came on my own responsibility. I thought you ought to know."

Mrs. Adamson stood long with bent head, taking counsel with that strong soul which had supported her so far. At last, "When do you think the end will come?" she asked gently.

"Oh, it's too pitiful—the doctor says he can't possibly live through the night!" burst out the nurse, wringing her hands together, tears running down her cheeks. "Oh, Mrs. Adamson, there's been nobody to think of you but me; and I just couldn't bear it! I know you never realized the possibility of anything so dreadful as this, you poor dear. And after Mr. Sinnet, of the Pine Street Mission, told me about you, I got leave and came out here."

"I'm sorry you did," said Mary gently. The nurse's hair was gray, but Mary Adamson put a kindly hand upon her shoulder as though she had been a little girl. "Don't you think that I contemplated such an outcome as this—for one of us?" she asked. "It was always myself that I saw dying, and dead; I'll admit that this is harder to decide about. Death—just to die? Why, that must come to all of us some time. Can't you see, child, that I've been through things that make death seem almost a small matter?" She paused a moment, and her voice was a little dry as she added. "I expect you're not married?"

"I have nobody—nobody in the world!" returned the nurse, with a sob catching in her throat. "If I lay dying there's no hard-hearted creature to make my last hours bitter by refusing to come to my bedside."

With a sigh Mary looked at the thin,

overwrought face. Those fanatic eyes would not understand; yet the wife spoke. "It's my accusation against marriage that it sets people to grudging each other life. Hush—no—I don't mean what you think, people who are really attached; but there's no way out for them except through a scandal or some such unsatisfactory course as this of mine. When the cords of an enforced, rigid, uncongenial union are drawn and drawn till they cut to the bone, when the spirit's life-blood runs down them, you can't help looking at the relief it would be if you—or the other one—could die and be done with it. It isn't a capital offense for a man to make the chambers of your soul clamorous with his inquiries, his demands, his presence—to make of himself the last creature on earth that you want to pass your days with—but it's the thing that most wives will grudge him his life for. They don't want to be divorced women—they've got no grievance to take into court, anyhow—but they do want to be widows, or free like you."

Rhoda Culberson took this as might have been expected. Shaking with rage and a sort of terror, she turned to the door. "I never heard such talk," she panted, her big prominent eyes drowned with tears, her thin mouth twitching uncontrollably. "I believe you're crazy. I don't want you to come to see your husband—I wouldn't let you in if you should come," forgetting that neither the authority to deny nor the authority to summon had been delegated to her.

"I shouldn't come while he was living," said the wife quietly, opening the door for her visitor. "You say you think he will not live till morning. I'll be there then."

All day Mary Adamson went about her work—she and Irish Norah were preparing the house for the family to return—forcing an interest in the tasks themselves, which held somewhat at bay thought of the crisis in her own affairs. Norah's loquacity passed by her hearing as though it were not; nor did she note that the girl had brought

in a bottle with her, and as the day wore on her efficiency waned and her disposition to oration waxed.

They had eaten the supper Mary prepared, Norah at the cheerful phase of intoxication, defying any man that lived to make her his wife, and stating that her present condition was the one she should have chosen out of all the world. Upstairs in the little stuffy room under the eaves a few more applications to the black bottle brought her to the lachrymose stage.

"It's a hard life we have," she declared, sitting on the edge of her cot, "you that annybody can tell is above it; me that sees no pleasure from day's end to day's end but a drop of the cray-tur'."

"Lie down. You'll feel better when you sleep," said Mary Adamson in a strained, monotonous voice.

With the retreat of the day's activities her own problems were marching upon her soul in an armed host, and the trivial chatter of the intoxicated woman seemed intolerable. She crouched at the little hooded window under the eaves; the wind was blowing the other way, and she stifled for a breath of air. With unseeing eyes she stared out into the dark and tried to think.

John was dying.

She attempted to hold her mind to that; but it slid away from her like water and rushed into far channels. Stunned, stupid, passive, a thing apart, she seemed to sit and watch it hurry back—back to the beginning of things; not the beginning of her love and companionship with John, not even past that to her childhood—her babyhood—her birth; no, the soul of her fled crying away from all petty, personal considerations and restrictions, and raced down the ages toward chaos—the earliest stirrings of life upon this planet. She seemed to float, protoplasm, in a vast sea of being, warming herself in the fecundating sun-rays; rolling toward that which she desired, flowing away from that which she desired not. None blames protoplasm for its attraction or repulsions; all recognize that its choice must be from God.

But John was dying.

After countless ages of disuse and forgetfulness, knowledge was renewed within her of how one atom is attracted to another, till they drift together and are united, rolling so easily with the tides of life, together or apart, none crucified if it's apart, and no thing held rigid, helpless, frozen to the other, if it's together; for with motion inhibited, ends choice—which is life.

The drunken woman on the bed moaned and gurgled in her sleep. Mary took her head in her hands and set her elbows on the window-sill. And up the long ages of the primal earth went ever hurrying her questing mind. It was aware of the world force groping for forms in which to utter—to express itself, bodying its crude thought tentatively in vast crawling, amorphous shapes, wallowing, snoring, shuffling in the slime which brought them forth. It saw these uncouth types either discarded or growing ever finer, reaching always toward the divinity that comes to recognition with conscious life.

And John was dying.

"For God's sake, get to your bed!" cried Norah, sitting up suddenly about three o'clock. "You'll be sick the mornin'." And with the inconsequence of a drowsy, half-intoxicated creature, she lay down and was instantly asleep.

Mary Adamson made no movement to rise. Her fleeing thought, over-leaping eons at a bound, had reached the early days of her own courtship. There had never been anybody but John for her; the attachment was sudden, mutual, a perfect mating, everyone in their village said. Reserved, herself, she had liked that spiritual officiousness of his that broke down her guard and made her one with him—it graced the lover. Married, he had been determined to help her soul over muddy places, as finer gentlemen protect their women from a knowledge of life's realities. Her spirit was a hawk, a very haggard; a pathfinder, it ever loved to voyage alone, and to bring back results, rather than to report ex-

periences. Yet, once the barrier was down, and by his hand, she found herself impelled through his expectancy to go to him with every issue of her life. For years she was undeterred—even hurried on—by the fact that she met an uncomprehension which was almost derision; and she bore with equanimity that her charm for him plainly lessened because of this very familiarity which he demanded. But she remembered with a kind of sickness when his passionate, insistent egotism began to pall upon her—when, paying her way with concessions that cost more than all they bought for her, she essayed the difficult route of withdrawal.

Her girlhood home was but across the village street; there lived the bachelor brother who died last year, the one whose need of her, whose sympathy with her own necessity for silence and some spiritual reserve, endeared him as the mere relationship could not have done.

This man looked at Mary's affairs with the seeing eye; information from her he had no need of, and the subject was never mentioned between them. He knew his sister's nature—a morbid pride in her own gentleness and compliance, which might carry her to mad lengths of renunciation. After it, a sullen brooding, which a man like Adamson would never understand; and, if the ultimate came, a frantic revolt, a bottomless implacability.

Would she never speak out—would she retreat and retreat upon her life, shrinking from her husband's aggressions, till she tumbled backward into the void? Was Adamson never to know what volcanic fires warmed the soil that brought forth a growth rich, strongly individual, yet too foreign to his thought for confidence, or even respect?

Her husband did not complain, in words, at first; yet she knew—and shrank—that every trip she made across the street was noted by him, and her return was greeted as though she had been to Europe. Instinctively, she never quoted her own people to John; yet sometimes he asked her if she

had not this or that idea from them, and sighed, stating—what everybody knew—that her brother was impractical, and it was sad to think so bright a man should be a failure as the world looks at things.

She remembered a night when she went with that brother to a *séance* in the hotel parlor where a traveling spiritual "healer" held forth. She had lied to her husband, and told him that she was to spend the evening in her father's house. Returning, she found her own door locked against her, and awaiting her the query which should have been awful to wifely ears, "Where have you been, and what doing?" Back, with the thought of it, came the rush of exultation which had followed her carrying off of that situation. She cared nothing for the doctrines of the traveling lecturer—but freedom to listen to them unquestioned would have been priceless to her. A grim amusement touched her lips at memory of her husband's face when she related the innocent nature of her employment, her escort, and added that she had lied to him only because he tyrannized over her and drove her to it. There was nobody to take her to forbidden places now. Her brother was dead.

And John was dying.

Then there came a time when, worn out, Mary began to have a sense of aloofness, of detachment from her life. Her husband still submitted all domestic questions to her; he told her with wearisome iteration that there was never a woman who had so completely her own way. Yet when the genesis of her very decision had to be shouted through his mental and spiritual density as to a deaf man, when seven reasons were required to shore and prop one simple preference—she gave up. She knew it was base; she recognized her own wrong-doing; but she gave up, and let his noisy insistence make of her life what it would. If she were ill, or indisposed to talk—she recalled thus the long nausea before her children came—a reason as susceptible of proof as a mathematical proposition must be given for her retirement. And even

then it was by no means accomplished; but she was, perhaps, carried off by a superior authority which insisted upon being kind to her and looking after her. She must lie down—no? Well, if not that, then she must sit in some particular chair, and have proffered to her the attention from which she had thought to flee.

The mere fact that she did not desire food had never been a valid reason for her absenting herself from the table. At such times, when the clang! clang! clang! of the loud dinner-bell rang through the house, and the boys came roystering home from the public school around the corner, she had shrunk as from a whip. Her children were always uncouthly boisterous with their father—he liked it; he had no nerves. A book she wanted to read, lying near a quiet, secluded window—how she had looked at them and longed to madness to sit there—alone, O God! alone—during the noisy dinner hour.

Never but once, save by lying down upon her bed and feigning actual pain, had she compassed the longed-for thing. It was before the little girl was born, the child that died in infancy; she had burst out and said some of these things to her husband. He left her alone finally with her book; but she could not read. She glowed like an image in a furnace, with shame and indignation and nameless fires of despairing resentment, when she remembered the odious sea of pained comment, cross-questioning and detailed explanation through which she had been forced to swim to that poor hour's smarting, tainted, dear-bought seclusion—she could not call it peace. Stung, quivering, so morbid that she was scarce sane in those days, she envied the wolves, the dogs, the mice in her chamber walls, the leaves on the trees—things small and inconsiderable, things low and loathsome, even as she envied the angels in heaven, who neither marry nor give in marriage.

Hard upon the loss of her own people and the desperate closing in of Mary's life came this chance to go East with

a party of other women. Once in Boston, they were told that she intended visiting relatives, the temptation for a little time to herself swept away everything else, and she sent the telegrams which informed John first of her illness and then of her death. Red-hot coals of her own misdoing strewed the path to freedom which she now strove to tread. But she pushed resolutely away from her thought of how another woman in her stead could have been so much truer wife, frankly but kindly opposing John's encroachments, speaking out without rancor, without terror, faithfully admonishing him; holding to her point, maintaining the integrity of her own soul. Oh, yes—yes—yes, but that was in the past. Filaments of that self-reproach twisted the cable which had so long held her, and must now be broken.

But John had not been satisfied with her telegram. He had come on, to learn of the falsehood, to hunt her out, and, finding her, to demand, personally and by proxy, full and sufficient reason for her course.

Could she tell him what he could not know?

The contemplation of her action, of her own soul, was like looking at a flood in which it was not trees and houses that were swallowed up, but the verities, the familiar landmarks of her life. After John discovered her, his sole bewildered idea seemed to be to get her run down and hemmed in. Had he been less honest in his patient egotism, his unshakable belief that he knew what was best for her at all times, he would have temporarily conceded the point, and left her alone that first day.

And now he was dying.

Too often she had contemplated the release that meant, to shrink before it now. The thought of death for herself had been so familiar to her as to leave no great pity in her heart that he went first. Yet—she got her breath heavily, with a sort of sick misery upon her—she had been taught too long to distrust herself to feel now that she could certainly be right.

But there was one headland which stood when all went down that former days had taught her to believe in, one landmark by which she steered her dreary course, in storm and stress, lashed to the mast, distrusting her very compass: it still loomed big before the eyes of her soul that she had paid all—all for such freedom as was now hers. Should she creep cowardly back and jeopardize any hundredth chance of it? The sun got suddenly up out of the eastern sky-line. Mary rose to her feet. Her eye was sunken and her cheek gray. She had nothing to show for her night's vigil. "I loved my husband and children," she whispered to herself in the chill dawn. "I turned my back. I relinquished everything for what I now have. It was an awful price to pay. That which I have bought with it must be very precious. I won't give it up—I won't give up any part of it."

"But John's"—she looked at the pink morning sky and finished with a curious, abrupt drop in her voice—"dead."

She dressed herself completely in street wear; then, shaking Norah by the shoulder to waken her, said, "I'm going out. I had a friend at the hospital who died last night. I must go down there. If I am detained, get your sister to come over and stay with you."

"Gawd! You heard about it quick, didn't you? Has a messenger been here a'ready?" and the Irish girl rubbed her sleepy eyes with doubled fists.

III

On the way downtown Mary had the car to herself, except for a boy and girl, who were evidently sweethearts, going on some little excursion together. The young fellow was slight and blond, but a trick he had of the head, a something in his voice, reminded her of John. Her husband had been about that age when he came first to the little village where she was born. She

turned and stared out of the window for so long that when she once more looked around her young lovers were gone, and a man with a baby in his arms was helping a woman on.

If the first pair had shaken her composure these two taxed it to the utmost. The baby was very young. The crocheted lace on its long skirts was a pattern she had made for the outfit of her first child—how long ago—with fingers how willingly bent to their task! The youthful parents whispered over and admired their new treasure; they passed it from one lap to the other, till Mary was glad to leave the car at the corner where a short walk would bring her to the hospital.

Arrived there, she presented the card which Norah had brought her yesterday, with her own name written in pencil beneath Miss Culberson's upon it. First she was taken from the lobby, upstairs; then she was moved from the waiting-room of one ward to the small office of another—and always in her progress she found herself an object of covert or open interest and curiosity. She had sat for ten minutes in the little office, her whole consciousness one vast, numbing pain, when a man, evidently a physician, came in and addressed her by name.

"Did Miss Culberson send for you this morning?" he asked kindly.

"No, she told me that—she said you expected—I suppose Mr. Adamson died last night, and I told her that I would be here today."

The physician puckered his lip, almost as though he would have whistled. "Oh, here is Miss Culberson to speak for herself," he said hastily, as the nurse appeared in the doorway. "I didn't know she was going out to see you yesterday, Mrs. Adamson."

Mary sprang to her feet and retreated to the farther wall of the office. "You were mistaken!" she gasped in a sort of whisper. "My husband is not dead—he has never been in any danger. It was a trick to get me here—to stultify all I have done. Let me go. Let me pass. I——"

Rhoda Culberson in the doorway shook from head to foot like a palsied thing. The forces with which her crude hands had meddled tossed her this way and that. "Wait!" she faltered, fighting for breath and composure as Mary tried to pass her. "I—he asked to see you just now—to—to say good-bye."

"Are you telling me the truth—this time?" asked Mary Adamson sternly.

The nurse nodded with closed lips. She was unable to speak. The physician drew back and the two women went together down the hall.

On a hospital couch lay the husband from whom Mary had fled—helpless, powerless now to pursue; yet stronger, as she dreaded, in this hour of his weakness than in the days of his merciless mastery.

She stood looking down on him drearily enough; well-nigh at the end of her resources, she could have envied John.

Suddenly his eyes opened and rested upon her. "You did come, Mary," he said gently. "I was afraid you wouldn't."

"She said you wanted to bid me good-bye," whispered the wife with rising terror. "Wasn't it true?"

"Oh, I'm not going to die," said the man on the bed, with a ghost of a smile touching to wistfulness his strong, plain features. "They say I'll be up now and able to go home in the course of a few days."

Mary turned resolutely toward the door. "I came to—to say good-bye," she repeated doggedly, yet with a catch in her breath and a swift backward glance toward the cot as she remembered that she had come expecting to find her husband already dead.

He had been very close to the source of all wisdom, this man whom death had held and released. Some things were made clear to him in a way which words could not compass. She paused incredulously to listen as he went softly on.

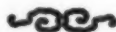
"Good-bye, then, dear. I shall know that you love me, Mary, wherever you

are. It has been shown to me that I must bless you and let you go. Good-bye."

She went back, bent down and studied his face desperately. It had always been honest. The man was consistent. If, by some miracle, he had been made to know—to feel—to understand—he would never retreat,

he would not go back from what he had seen to be right. As he made an end she flung herself down beside the couch, clutching its draperies, bursting into mangled sobs, crying out:

"Oh, with you—with you, John! with you and our children—that's the only place on earth I want to be—now!"



THE BOOK OF DREAM

By Clinton Scollard

I READ in the untroubled Book of Dream
 Of beatific things,
 Lovely imaginings,
 The splendid poms and pageants of old kings—
 Gleam upon golden gleam!
 Each glamour'd line
 To my enraptured vision
 Under unclouded arches sapphirine
 Made revelation and interpretation,
 (Ah, but they seemed divine!)
 Of sights that swam elusive yet elysian.
 From rune to silver rune rippled the theme
 Of the charm'd Book of Dream
 Until it touched on love, and on your name
 Girt as with morning flame.
 There was I fain to dwell,
 Brooding above each lyric syllable;
 But nay—eclipse!
 What broke the spell,
 Darkened the beam,
 Closed the sweet Book of Dream?
 Your laughter, and swift after
 Your kiss upon my lips!



A GENTLE REMINDER

ARDENT LOVER—Oh, I could love you forever, without ceasing, day and night, eternally, always . . .
 SENSIBLE GIRL—Yes, dear, of course; but you mustn't forget that one of us must earn *our* living.

A COLLABORATION

By Guy Bolton

"YOUTH is such a hard thing to get over," sighed the elder Miss Gresham on an almost despairing note. "Do you know I still find myself feeling behind to see if the ribbon has dropped off my pig-tail?"

"Lucky child! the ribbon, indeed! The hair is what worries me," and I ruefully touched my high, scantily-fringed temples. "Besides, though you may not be, as you say, 'over it,' aren't you—well—convalescent?"

"That is the most provoking part of it. I've so many candles to blow out on my cake that I'm windbroken before I get through. And yet, when I called on an editor the other day he said, as he handed me back my manuscript, 'You mustn't be discouraged, Miss Gresham. You'll have plenty of time to publish after Norman Baxter Bently and some of the present fads are antiquated and forgotten.'"

I looked at her reproachfully. "You must have been saying things about me."

"Yes, but *nice* things," explained Miss Gresham eagerly. "I told him that you were a great deal cleverer than your books. You see," she continued, without pausing for my modest protest, "we had just been having such an interesting talk about the wearying seesaw of public taste between realism and idealism—the sudden vogue of which latter school disgusts him, he declares, no less than it does me."

"But, Ruth," I interrupted, spreading my hands protestingly, "you wouldn't have them batten on one diet, would you?"

"No," she conceded regretfully, "I

suppose not, but if we could only fuse the two schools. Realism seasoned with incident in about the proportion that beef is seasoned with mustard would be just the thing—only you wretched romanticists, like so many modern Petruchios, try to feed us on condiments."

I met Miss Gresham's evident desire to argue with a Fabian silence, and resting her chin on her hand she gazed abstractedly at the carpet. I gazed at Miss Gresham, and was struck afresh by her soft-colored prettiness, the broad white forehead half-hidden by waves of red-brown hair and the grave underglow of her alert gray eyes. As I reflected, these were things to which our brother and sisterly relation were apt to render me obtuse.

Suddenly her face lighted, sparkled. She clapped her hands. "I have the idea," she exclaimed.

"Don't tell me then. I might unconsciously plagiarize it."

"I was wondering how we could fuse the two schools," she swept on, unheeding, "when it suddenly came to me. Norman Bently, we'll collaborate."

I adjusted my glasses and stared at her. Throughout our long acquaintance her sense of humor had always shown itself to be of that harmless kind which thinks funny the opposite of serious. This awful welding of the two struck me aghast.

"Collaborate?" I echoed inanely.

She nodded, smiling, while my eye instinctively wandered round the well-chosen decorations of the room. No means of escape presented itself save an apoplectic seizure. I riveted my gaze on a bronze cast of the "Dying Gaul."

"It would be awfully jolly, but isn't collaboration a secret process, like making aluminum or liquid air?"

"I don't believe the recipe is in any of the literary cook-books, but that need not bother us. My scheme is simply that we write alternating chapters, after first agreeing on a plot. Indeed, I have the framework of a splendid story somewhere in here," she added, rummaging eagerly among a pile of papers on her desk. "It's complete, except for the ending, which I will leave to you. As an old lady once remarked when she was defending one of your popular climaxes, 'You are quite right, my dear. To me, Mr. Bently is always happiest in his endings.'"

I accepted unquestioningly both the parenthetic tribute and the paper she handed me. As I glanced down the neatly typed sheet, a suspicion struck me.

"You have another copy?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she airily explained. "I always keep two in case one should be lost. But you needn't stop to read it now, as I see you're in a hurry to be off to the welcoming arms of the social world." (I had made a start for the fresh air.) "I'll send it to you with the first chapter as soon as we get to Muskoka. But oh—before you go—about the title. It says in the 'Writer's Friend' that this should not be left to the chance of a happy afterthought, but decided before a word is written. Something simple and at the same time broadly suggestive seems to be the thing just now. What do you say to 'The Sweepers'?"

"Excellent. I thought of a title the other day that has a good ring to it—'The Stairs of Hope.'"

"I like my own best, but I don't want to be selfish. Why don't you stop in and ask Mr. Brock which will work into the best cover design?"

In the days following this conversation I found myself several times repenting the acquiescence into which Ruth Gresham had so easily trapped me. The idea, too, that it was all pre-arranged returned to me with stronger conviction, and was further increased

by the arrival of the promised first chapter only one week after the Greshams left town.

It came in with my eggs, and discarding the paper in its favor I propped it against the coffee-pot. The opening scene was a stretch of Long Island coast—just such a spot as had been our favorite resort in the days when Ruth Gresham was my only admirer, or "audience," as she once corrected. "Though I don't suppose you distinguish between the two." Indeed I experienced quite a pleasant retrospective glow as I read of a "long, shelving beach running back to the heather-covered dunes whose rolling monotony gives a deceptive air of permanence to their ever-changing faces." This feeling was chilled later by the introduction of the characters—a rather half-baked, poetical youth and a girl slightly younger, but regarding her comrade in that maternal way peculiar to the elder sister of a motherless family.

I explained these biographical touches by that strange fondness of the realists for drawing on their own experiences in their portrayals of life, yet I think even then I must have felt some vague foreshadowing of my approaching discovery. The skeleton (which term I was advised realism had substituted for the obnoxious plot) was so shaky, so badly in need of scientific articulation, as to set me wondering what Miss Gresham could have meant by proclaiming it a "splendid story."

Resolved to infuse what action I could into this cross-section of life, I decided on a trip to Europe for the young man, and, with the easy authority of a beneficent Providence, to this end devoted my allotted chapter. I waited, in consequence, some time for the next instalment, as my collaborator had been obliged—she explained—to send for some "Baedekers." Considering that she had never been abroad and her morbid insistence on accurate "color," it was a rather shabby trick I had played on her.

She had, however, risen to the occasion wonderfully. I discovered our

hero climbing a peak in the Pennine Alps for a view of the sunrise and returning to the hotel in time to write a long letter to the girl on the beach before *déjeuner*. His uncle wished him to return and go into the wholesale stationery business, but as he querulously asked, "Am I but to prepare the material on which others shall address their muse?"

In reply I strongly advised him to do so—through the medium of the girl, Cora by name. As she explained, poets will get stationery somewhere, and it pays much better to sell things than to consume them. Besides, he could write poems after business hours and get his paper at cost price.

The young man decided from this that not even Cora understood him, and tearing up her letter cast its fragments into the Rhone, after which action I properly turned my back upon him and devoted myself to bringing Cora to town. The Fall gales were beginning at the shore and I feared she showed symptoms of decline. Having turned away from the social whirl in which I had tried to interest her, I let Miss Gresham commit her to settlement work as a nice compromise between consumption and society, and also because my collaborator's own experiences well fitted her to describe it.

I had, indeed, begun to wonder when we were to emerge from these quiet biographical reaches into the boundless seas of imagination on which I confess myself more at home. And, then, some chance words of our hero, a once favorite phrase of my own, brought me stumbling on the fact that must have been growing back of my consciousness from the first. I suddenly realized that this rambling hotchpotch contained an inner significance—the poet was myself!

Turning to the earlier pages for confirmation of my discovery, I smiled at not having seen it before. The exercise of imagination in Miss Gresham's chapters was limited to a description of European scenery and an unflattering display of the poet's, or—as I might now say—my own thoughts. But her

motives in thus holding up a mirror to me were not so apparent. My modesty took refuge in the idea that it might be a medium for unveiling her own sentiments, in the reflection that her effort was probably nothing more than to correct that "spoiling" she was always talking about since my name had appeared in "Who's Who."

The question still in doubt, I turned to the story with a thrill that literature had withheld from me since the days of Marryat and "The Mohicans." "No," I wrote in response to an inquiry in the next week's letter, "I am not at all tired of it. Despite his many faults, I have never so liked and admired the personality of one of my heroes as I do our poet, and in direct antithesis to my usual method I write down my own thoughts and opinions whenever I speak for him." In my accompanying chapter I further evinced quite a personal interest in filling out the young man's figure, in buying him some clothes, and getting him on a steamer bound for America. Mindful of the effectiveness of storms, I did not even then entrust him to the mercies of realism, but took him over, passed him through the Custom House, and left him waiting on the corner for a Belt Line car.

He was still waiting when the story returned to me, as Miss Gresham had contented herself with a chapter of microscopic introspection on Cora's part. "Is my love dead?" she asked. "Or is a feeling that survives the disillusionment of maturer judgment a truer affection?"

"Was *this* biography?" I in turn debated, and unable to answer either my own question or Cora's, I took the fortunes of my prototype again in hand, arranging for another poem (they had, of course, gained in power through privation) that served at once to make him the lion of a fashionable gathering at the home of a millionaire art patron and to buy him a dress-suit to appear there in. I also began to intimate that he was handsome, and several nice girls asked him to tea.

Miss Gresham responded by contriv-

ing another function at which he met Cora. Considering their long parting, his remarks were in a light and frivolous vein that fitted the situation very badly, but I rather suspected the author deemed this a particularly skilful piece of portraiture.

My uncertainty as to the place I occupied in Ruth Gresham's esteem perplexed me no more than did the state of my feeling for her; though, after routing out an old bundle of letters penned in a slightly more girlish stage of my collaborator's handwriting, I came to the conclusion that in those days, at least, our comradeship had meant more to her than it had to me. Recalling, as it did, the freshness of early acquaintance, this correspondence also served to give me a clearer view of the writer—one of those complete impressions so hard to regain after the vision has been shortened to the range of intimacy. My compunction at the remembrance of how I had latterly neglected the girl who had alone believed in me was eased by the complacent conviction that it was not too late to make amends—a presumption based on Miss Gresham's parting remark. "Remember," she had said, "the ending rests with you."

I took up the story once more with an exhilarating sense of power that I was loath to relinquish. The ending could wait, and meantime, partly in wanton display of this easy mastery, partly to render the coming climax more effective, I introduced my rival. Wentworth was fitted out with a most attractive personality, and I spoke of remarkable eyes and a rich, sonorous voice. His entrance, too, was dramatic, as he happened to be by when a boat, containing Cora, among others, was capsized in a squall and, "pausing only to divest himself of coat and shoes, he gallantly swam to their rescue."

"There," I sighed as I dropped the now bulky envelope into the letter-box, "is an adventure at last and that, thank heaven, is *not* biography."

Cora had turned so cold a shoulder on all the eligibles I had before presented that I anticipated little better

fortune for her handsome rescuer. My astonishment was, therefore, less remarkable than the shade of chagrin I experienced upon finding Wentworth raised to the bi-weekly call level of Cora's friendship in the succeeding alternation of realism.

"I like your Wentworth immensely," wrote Miss Gresham. "Only, if you don't mind, I want to rewrite the description of that accident, as I underwent a somewhat similar one, no more than a week ago. My canoe was upset—fortunately quite near the bank—so that Mr. Agnew, a very nice fellow who is staying at the next camp, was able, as the current bore me past their float, to reach over and fish me out. One of the chief beauties of the literary life is that we can turn even such disagreeable incidents as these into copy."

Then, as if fearing that my feelings might be wounded by her request, she had added a postscript. "Your character delineation has surprised me," she wrote. "You exhibit with such fine consistence the poet's weakness, his love of being idolized, his selfish neglect of those whose praise he finds inadequate. And all this seems so distressingly lifelike that you win my grudging applause. Behold! I drop a curtsey to the Romanticist."

Both letter and manuscript slipped unheeded from my knees as I arose and unlocked the decanter-case. It was a warm night and my nerves seemed upset.

"Agnew?" I murmured. "There was an Agnew introduced to me one night at the Scriveners', disgustin' young-Greek-god sort of chap." I shook my head, unable to find a further link for these identities than the patronymic. Whatever Agnew might be he was at all events Wentworth. He fitted into the third character of our masquerade with as conclusive a neatness as did Satan in the serpent's skin.

But in our drama, what part was he destined to play? How much of Ruth's avowed liking for Wentworth already represented her feeling for her own rescuer? My sense of mastery

had shrunk to one of impotency before the unknown power of this bizarre reflection, this creature of my own imagination.

Drawing out a sheet of paper I wrote at the top, "Chapter XII," and then, as I still cling to my fondness for verse headings, Guinevere's words:

He is all fault who has no fault at all,
For who loves me must have a touch of earth.

I realized that the previous portrait had been inartistic, and some measure of my lost assurance returned to me as I applied myself to the task of working a few shadows into Wentworth's canvas. No portent of impending disaster marred my pleasure as I hinted a past, and slipped in the whispered warning of a handsome adventuress. That even the warning could be shown to concern my prototype did not occur to me, and when, two weeks later, I was confronted with Wentworth in the guise of a sage friend, his hand resting on the poet's shoulder, I shook myself in illustrative disgust. "Give up all that sort of thing, old man," he was saying, "for the sake of an older and better friendship. Cora is still quite fond of you."

"Ruth is still quite fond of you," I could catch the Apollo-like Agnew's patronizing murmur, and in the sting of this affront I knew that had the pen been in my hand at that moment I should have killed John Wentworth.

Of course, the materials for so doing lay ready on my desk, but I dropped back inertly in my chair as I realized the futility of such an act. My creature, like Frankenstein's monster, had passed beyond my control. I could shatter the puppet, but the real Wentworth was probably now piloting Ruth Gresham's canoe up one of the head streams of Muskoka.

Viewed in the light of later events, there was something pathetic in my last struggles to increase the sum of the poet's attractions. I brought out a new volume of poems, and even quoted the first two lines of some of the best. I corrected a bohemian tendency in the matter of neckties, and

heaved a sigh of contented omnipotence as, taking thought of Miss Gresham's prejudices, I added a cubit to his stature, turning back to render earlier descriptions in accordance with the change.

Even so, I was decidedly nervous as I arranged his love-making, and I have since thought that I may, in consequence, have made him too humble—always a great mistake in lovers, and one that has been fostered by the writers of romantic fiction. The climax at last reached, the issue now clearly presented, I composed myself with what patience I might to await Miss Gresham's answer. An interminable week passed, during which I was several times on the point of taking train for Canada, before the familiar package again presented itself in my morning's mail.

My eagerness was such that I opened it before my eggs and anxiously scanned its pages over the rim of my coffee-cup. It took but a moment to show me that the worst had happened—Cora was engaged to Wentworth. It was some minutes before I could go on with either the story or my breakfast, and when I did again take up the former it was with a but apathetic interest in the further fate of my lay figure. I discovered him packing up to return to Europe, and even a less personal regard than mine might well have been moved by his hopeless regret of his once undeniable opportunity—an opportunity he had sacrificed to selfish ambition and empty vanity.

No thought of refusing to identify my fate with that of the hero occurred to me. If he had been used as a medium for my awakening he had been used as a medium for my dismissal, and could the catastrophe need further evidence of its reality than the ardent effect Miss Gresham had given the proposal and subsequent plighting of troth? Such transcendence of her usual matter-of-fact method could only be permitted by realism on the warrant of carefully noted personal experience.

No, I would adopt her suggestion and start for Europe as soon as I could arrange my affairs, among which I included the poet's suicide and his parting letter to Cora. I derived a gloomy satisfaction from the thought that it would be my own death—in effigy. Conceived in nursery days and fostered by years of literary neglect, I now felt with added conviction that “they’d be sorry when I was dead.”

Perhaps the heat in the city for the last two weeks—it was still early in August—had affected me. At any rate, I was worked up to a considerable pitch as I sat down that night to accomplish the end of the unfortunate young man. I was looking under the heading of “Poisons” in the encyclopedia, when what is the last stay, alike of novelist and dynamiter, slipped from under me in the sudden realization that here was a pass where death itself would be ineffective.

Upon this conviction—the last drop of gall in my bitter cup—I threw aside the manuscript with its clumsy masquerade and addressed the few remarks I wished to make in the epistolary form. The remarks multiplied, my pen gathered eloquence as I wrote, and without waiting for the editing of colder reflection I went out and posted my letter before going to bed.

I awoke with much the feeling of having done something seismic, that I might have experienced had I murdered a poet in the flesh. Exactly what this was I could hardly have said, until I tore open Ruth's reply early in the succeeding week:

MY POOR DEAR NORMAN:

I have tried to extract the few grains of sentiency that I suppose lie hidden in the wild missive that reached me today. I think you had better go out of town—I see it has been ninety-five in the shade for a

week—and rest up a bit. Your chapters, I noticed, have been getting a bit down of late.

No, I have not become engaged to anybody, and feel quite flattered to think that the way I handled Cora's engagement made you think I had, but like most people you don't seem to credit us realists with any imagination whatever. Why do you say, “I have seen the meaning of your chapters for some time”? I should hope you had. My style is nothing if not lucid, but I presume you have become one of those super-subtle people who are always finding in a story hidden meanings that have escaped the author.

I have not forgotten our own little romance of the South Shore, and I still have the letters you refer to. As for the other question, dear boy, I can only say that this is not the place nor the way to give you an answer. Indeed, you have so succeeded in mixing me up with your “yous” and “shes” that I am in much the same plight as yourself, and can hardly disentangle my identity from that of Cora.

I am going to adopt your “alternate suggestion,” as you term it, and show that Cora consented to marry Wentworth only because she thought his nobleness deserving of the reward he sought, and so the love for her old comrade will at length triumph. “If you choose the poet,” you write, “then kill Wentworth.” To tell you the truth, I will do this without a tear, as such perfection is apt to excite murderous desires in a breast no more than mortal. If you think a natural end will do, I will kill him, but should you insist on violent means I shall leave it to you.

Remember, Norman, you have to write the last chapter—

I read the letter through three times and when I at last folded it and put it carefully in my pocket-case I smiled. “*Ars est celare artem*,” I murmured, and smiled again—reflectively.

On my way to the station I stopped at a telegraph office

“Killed Wentworth by all means,” I gaily wrote. “I am coming up to arrange with you about that last chapter.”



VIRTUE is too often someone else's reward.

AFTER THE OPERA*

By George Docquois

FROM A STORY BY JEAN REIBRACH

A PLAY IN ONE ACT AND THREE SCENES

CHARACTERS

MONSIEUR DE CHEVILLE.
GEORGES ROUVE.
ANTONIN (DE CHEVILLE'S servant).
THE COMMISSARY OF POLICE.
FIRST WATCHMAN.

SECOND WATCHMAN.
THE MAN.
THE DOCTOR.
LOUISE DE CHEVILLE.
MADAME LIVOIS (*her maid*).

SCENE I—LOUISE DE CHEVILLE'S room, a daintily luxurious apartment. The entrance door is at the back of the stage, toward the right. In the back, also, is an alcove, containing MADAME DE CHEVILLE'S bed. Between the door and the alcove is a dressing-table. In front of this are chairs. On the right, toward the middle of the stage, is a door leading to the upper stories of the house, and on the same side, in the foreground, is another door opening into a dressing-room. On the left is a fireplace with a wood fire burning. An arm-chair is comfortably near the fire and between it and the alcove an electric wall switch that controls the lights. Beside a chair near the footlights is an open traveling-bag.

MADAME LIVOIS is apparently putting the finishing touches to its packing as the curtain rises.

ANTONIN (*coming from the dressing-room*)

Here is the suit.
(*He places it upon the chair.*)

MADAME LIVOIS

Thank you.

ANTONIN

Is that all? Have I forgotten anything?

MADAME LIVOIS

I think not.

ANTONIN (*suddenly*)

Goodness . . . the shirts!
(*He goes out quickly at right.*)

MADAME LIVOIS (*not understanding*)

The shirts?

ANTONIN (*from the dressing-room*)

Of course. . . .

MADAME LIVOIS

Why, how many are you going to take?

ANTONIN

Oh, three or four!

MADAME LIVOIS

Nonsense! Monsieur de Cheville doesn't need four shirts for a day's trip.

ANTONIN (*still off stage*)

How do you know it's only for a day?

MADAME LIVOIS

I thought—

ANTONIN (*coming from the outer room*)

There (*lays a package of shirts upon the chair near MADAME LIVOIS*), now I'm sure I've brought everything. Why don't you be more careful and turn out those lights? It's no wonder you've never a sou.

(*He turns the switch which controls the lights in the dressing-room; turning toward her, he points to the chair.*)

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What! you haven't folded that suit yet. . . . What a slow-poke!

MADAME LIVOIS

I take pains, Antonin! If you but did the same! Such a man!

(ANTONIN has crossed over to the left and is putting on his overcoat and hat, which are on the arm-chair.)

ANTONIN (shrugs his shoulders, as if it were an old story)

Be quiet, please! . . . I am in a hurry, Madame Livois. Monsieur de Chevillie ordered me to be ready to come downstairs with everything the minute he rang the door-bell. . . . The train won't wait for us, but perhaps you don't know that!

(She puts the suit of clothes in the bag.)

MADAME LIVOIS

Isn't he even coming upstairs?

ANTONIN

No! He's bringing Madame back from the opera. . . . (Interrupting himself.) What time is it? (He looks at his watch.) Ten minutes past twelve . . . they're on their way—and not far off, either!

(He busies himself with rolling and strapping a fur coat.)

MADAME LIVOIS

What's all the hurry?

ANTONIN (going on without answering her)

He isn't even going to get out of the carriage—I shall sit with the driver and we're off to the station pell-mell.

MADAME LIVOIS

There isn't a train so late.

ANTONIN

Oh, yes, there is—at one-three . . . let's see, it's half an hour from here to the station. We can make it if he's here in five minutes.

(MADAME LIVOIS closes the bag.)

MADAME LIVOIS

There! Here's the key.

ANTONIN

Thank you. . . . Now there's nothing to do but wait, I suppose.

(MADAME LIVOIS carries the bag to the door at back. She has taken the fur coat from ANTONIN and lays it beside the bag. Meanwhile ANTONIN has seated himself in the arm-chair, and from his pocket takes a cigarette-case, which he opens.)

MADAME LIVOIS (seeing him)

Oh, Antonin! In Madame's room!

ANTONIN

(He looks at her, growls and puts the cigarette-case back in his pocket)

I am worried—at least I might smoke!

MADAME LIVOIS

Why worry? He can't blame you. Even you must have had the sense to tell him the telegram only came at a quarter-past ten. And that I sent you with it at once?

ANTONIN

Of course I told him.

MADAME LIVOIS

But you nearly got into trouble.

ANTONIN (feigning innocence)

How? What?

MADAME LIVOIS

Didn't you mean to go out at nine?

ANTONIN

Pooh! Just for a breath of air!

MADAME LIVOIS (meaningly)

Yes; and when would you have come back?

ANTONIN (airily)

Oh, before midnight!

MADAME LIVOIS

That would have been nice, with the telegram here at ten, waiting to be delivered.

ANTONIN

Yes, very nice!

MADAME LIVOIS

You would have been discharged and it would have served you right.

ANTONIN

Very probably. But next year when they have the messenger boys in Paris that will help in cases like that. (Reflecting.) I suppose there would have been trouble—Monsieur de Chevillie doesn't mince matters when things are serious.

MADAME LIVOIS

So it is something serious, then?

ANTONIN

Very serious!

MADAME LIVOIS

Ah!

(There is a pause.)

ANTONIN (rising)

I must have a puff of my cigarette.

MADAME LIVOIS
Where?

ANTONIN
In Madame's dressing-room. I'll open the window on the street—and I can see them as they come, too.

MADAME LIVOIS
Wait a minute. You haven't told me yet—

ANTONIN
What?
MADAME LIVOIS
Sit down.

ANTONIN
I am listening.
MADAME LIVOIS (*seating herself*)
Well, then, you found Monsieur and Madame in their box at the opera?

ANTONIN
Yes, with Monsieur Rouve.
MADAME LIVOIS (*significantly*)
With Monsieur Rouve?

ANTONIN
Yes, and it was mighty good to see him; he hasn't been to the house for dinner for over a month. He looked sad, though.

MADAME LIVOIS
You didn't think of asking him why?

ANTONIN
Stop joking.

MADAME LIVOIS
Well, Monsieur Georges Rouve was there—and what then?

ANTONIN
Well, Monsieur opened the telegram. "Good God," he cried, "this is awful! We must go immediately." Madame couldn't be quick enough with her wraps. We went to the Café de la Paix, where Monsieur looked at a timetable, while Madame and Monsieur Rouve were reading the telegram again. Monsieur wanted to start at once, but Madame insisted that he should have a bite first. He refused, saying he had no appetite after such news. But Monsieur Rouve added his persuasions, and finally Monsieur yielded. You see, it was only eleven o'clock, after all, and he did have time. Monsieur told me I must go with him on the trip, and sent me off post-haste to pack his bag.

MADAME LIVOIS
And what's it all about?

ANTONIN
Something has happened in Monsieur's mines.

MADAME LIVOIS
Another accident from that dirty fire-damp?

ANTONIN
No, Madame Livois, not that—there was a cave-in in the valley, and a dozen miners' houses went with it.

MADAME LIVOIS
With the people?

ANTONIN
Yes.
MADAME LIVOIS
And they are dead?

ANTONIN
Of course, stupid.
MADAME LIVOIS
How miserable Monsieur must be.
ANTONIN (*looking at his watch again*)
My, it's late—twenty past twelve! (*He rises.*)

MADAME LIVOIS
Will you be away more than a day?

ANTONIN
How inquisitive you are!
MADAME LIVOIS

But tell me, really. I shall be nervous. With you away I shall be alone with Madame in this big house, and worse luck, Nanette, the chambermaid, has gone off to Saint Quentin, to her sister's wedding. . . . Oh! what a pity the cook isn't a bachelor!

ANTONIN (*laughing*)
You would marry him?

MADAME LIVOIS
You're a fool—of course not, but he'd sleep in the house if he were.

ANTONIN
Don't worry . . . nothing has ever happened here and it never will.

MADAME LIVOIS
True, so far—but who can tell?

ANTONIN (*looking at his watch once more*)
The devil! (*Bell below rings.*) Ah, there they are. . . . Quick! (*He picks up the bag and the fur coat.*) Au revoir, Madame Livois, and don't be nervous. Everything'll be all right. No, don't come down. . . . Prepare Madame's bed . . . she told

me to tell you she would retire immediately.

MADAME LIVOIS

The bed is ready . . . is the lamp in the hall lighted?

ANTONIN

Yes. . . . *Au revoir!*
(*He goes out quickly.*)

MADAME LIVOIS (*calling after him*)

Au revoir— (She comes down to the front of the stage and looks around.) Ah! Madame's dressing-gown. (She goes into the dressing-room.)

(MADAME DE CHEVILLE enters by the rear door, which has been left open. She is hatless, of course, and still wears her opera-cloak. On her corsage is a superb cluster of jewels, and about her neck a magnificent diamond necklace. LOUISE closes the door and comes to the centre of the room, meanwhile taking off her gloves.)

LOUISE (*as she removes her cloak*)

Are you there, Madame Livois?

MADAME LIVOIS (*from the dressing-room*)

Yes, Madame.

(MADAME LIVOIS enters quickly, bringing a lace dressing-gown, which she throws upon the bed. She then goes toward the door at back.)

LOUISE (*somewhat sharply*)

Where are you going?

MADAME LIVOIS

To see if all the doors are locked, Madame.

LOUISE

It's not necessary. I took good care to close everything behind me. . . . Help me undress.

MADAME LIVOIS (*beginning to unhook LOUISE's dress*)

But . . .

LOUISE

What is the matter, Madame Livois?

MADAME LIVOIS

The house-door may be solid . . . but if Madame has not put up the bars . . .

LOUISE

Calm yourself. I put them up.

MADAME LIVOIS

And . . . doubtless Madame

has also bolted the door of the ante-room.

LOUISE

Yes, and the door of the drawing-room as well.

MADAME LIVOIS (*relieved*)

Oh, then . . .

LOUISE

Yes. . . . You see you may go to bed in perfect safety.

MADAME LIVOIS (*helping her on with the dressing-gown*)

Nevertheless I'm uneasy, and I don't like to go upstairs and leave Madame here all alone.

LOUISE (*crossly*)

Yor. surely don't expect to sleep in my bed!

MADAME LIVOIS (*laughing*)

Oh, Madame, no! Certainly not! (*Seriously.*) But there is a folding cot in Madame's dressing-room, and if Madame would permit . . .

LOUISE

My good Madame Livois, your fears are groundless and somewhat irritating. Please go to your own room.

MADAME LIVOIS

The fact is . . . I feel the responsibility!

LOUISE

You mustn't act as if I were a child. (*She seats herself at the dressing-table.*)

MADAME LIVOIS (*apologetically*)

No! . . . But I remember Madame's telling me that, if by chance she ever became frightened, she was sure she wouldn't have strength to cry out.

LOUISE

What possible occasion is there for fear?

MADAME LIVOIS

Madame might perhaps be ill . . .

LOUISE

If I were it's not likely to be serious enough to prevent my getting up and touching that excellent button, which rings the bell in your room. (*She points to a button placed above the electric switch.*)

MADAME LIVOIS (*a little comforted*)

I had forgotten that. Well, then, good night, Madame.

LOUISE (*rising*)
Thank you, Madame Livois. Good night.

MADAME LIVOIS (*stopping*)
But surely Madame does not intend to wear her necklace in bed?

LOUISE
Gracious! I had forgotten it. Unfasten it for me, please!

(MADAME LIVOIS *unfastens her necklace and places it in a drawer of the dressing-table.*)

MADAME LIVOIS (*starting*)
Ah!

LOUISE (*startled*)
What is it?

MADAME LIVOIS (*frightened*)
I thought I heard . . .

LOUISE (*weakly*)
A noise? I don't hear a sound.

MADAME LIVOIS (*after a pause*)
To be sure. . . . But Madame has forgotten to push this bolt here!
LOUISE (*reseating herself at the dressing-table*)

Bolt it!
(*Having pushed the bolt, MADAME LIVOIS goes toward the electric button and presses it; a bell on the floor above rings loudly.*)

LOUISE (*startled again*)
What's that?

MADAME LIVOIS
Pardon me, Madame; I wished to see if the bell worked!

LOUISE (*relieved and yet annoyed*)
Goodness! Will you ever be through?

MADAME LIVOIS
Good night, Madame.

LOUISE
Good night.

(MADAME LIVOIS *goes out by the second door, which leads upstairs. LOUISE listens closely to the diminishing sound of MADAME LIVOIS's footsteps. There is a short pause. She rises, and goes toward the door through which her maid has gone. She opens it gently, glances into the darkness and again listens. She closes the door, and goes to the one at back. Cautiously, she unbolts and opens it.*)

LOUISE
Are you there? Come . . .
(GEORGES ROUVE *enters, in evening*

dress. He is evidently nervous and ill at ease.)

Ah! My Georges, at last!

GEORGES
How frightfully foolish!

LOUISE (*listening*)
'Sh!

GEORGES (*alarmed*)
What is it?

LOUISE
Nothing. Did you close the entrance door?

GEORGES
Yes.

LOUISE
And the bars?

GEORGES
What bars?

LOUISE
The ones that go across the door to make it secure. You didn't put them up?

GEORGES
No!

LOUISE
You forgot what I told you an hour ago at the Café de la Paix?

GEORGES
You said you would leave the door ajar, so that I might slip in quietly.

LOUISE
But I also said to be sure to lock everything behind you. . . . It is imperative. . . . I must go and attend to it.

GEORGES (*stopping her*)
It isn't worth while.

LOUISE
Not worth while? Why?

GEORGES
Because I'm not going to stay.

LOUISE
What! You won't stay?

GEORGES
No! My presence here, in your house—in your husband's house—is too contemptible. It hasn't the shadow of an excuse.

LOUISE
It has one: my wish—my love.

GEORGES
Say, rather, your threats.

LOUISE
My threats, then! Let's not play with words. An hour ago at the café

I was at the end of my tether. I told you if you did not come to me here to-night I should have gone to you after my husband left, and I meant it; you know I would have done it.

GEORGES

I did not dare doubt you—and that's why I came; . . . but I am here against my will. . . . I am ashamed.

LOUISE (*twining her arm about him*)

And I, Georges, am happy. What do your foolish fears matter? You are here. I see you—close to me, and that is enough to make the rest of the world seem small and cheap—and—nothing.

(*With her arms around his neck, she pulls him close to her.*)

GEORGES

Don't—don't! My shame is doubled by your lack of it. Let me go. (*She does not heed him.*) Here in your room, with your arms close around me, I feel that we two make but a single being, one single, infamous being.

(*GEORGES suddenly releases himself and goes to the left.*)

LOUISE (*following him*)

No, no! You are wrong! Love is never infamous!

GEORGES

It is you who will not see how contemptible we are—how mean and wicked.

LOUISE

No, it is not true. . . . I love you! I love you! My conscience—it does not count. It is destiny. Nothing can make you stop loving me, and everything in me is irresistibly dragging me to you.

GEORGES

And it is so you seek to justify your passion—a passion that everything in you, *everything* ought to crush, if you still possessed a shred of reason . . . you are mad!

LOUISE

Yes, I am mad: mad from the happiness you have given me—its memory almost drove me to suicide, during this whole last month, when I never saw you once alone—a month, a whole month without your caresses—without

all—all in you that I adore, and from which—I warn you—nothing shall separate me.

GEORGES (*aghast*)

What!

LOUISE (*seating herself before him in the arm-chair*)

But don't you—can't you understand? When you first came to this house I had existed—*existed* in it for thirteen years. The moment I first saw you suddenly I knew that I had not *lived*, really lived, in it for a single day, not even for a minute, not for one *second*!

GEORGES

It is appalling! And your tone is sincerity itself.

LOUISE

Yes, I *am* speaking the truth.

GEORGES

It isn't possible—it can't be!

LOUISE

What do you mean?

GEORGES

I'm not vain enough to believe that until you met me you did not know happiness.

LOUISE

I thought I knew it, but it was an illusion—a false happiness because it was not founded upon love, true love—like ours. And suddenly after thirteen years I discovered that my life had been a sacrifice—I found it out in your very first look—in that look I read that my life had not yet begun. But I knew I was about to live and to know happiness at last, for you held it in your arms and were bringing it to me.

GEORGES

What I brought you was misery.

LOUISE

That misery is sufficient for me, and for that misery I shall live, and for it only.

GEORGES

I shall prevent you.

LOUISE

How?

GEORGES

I shall leave Paris.

LOUISE (*distracted*)

You no longer love me?

GEORGES (*passionately*)
Would to God——!

LOUISE (*with a touch of triumph*)
Ah! Then you will *not* go away.

GEORGES (*with deliberation*)
Yes! I still love you, Louise, but
(*pausing*) I shall go away.

LOUISE
Why?

GEORGES
Because it is impossible for me to remain; because when I think of the circumstances, of the scruples I cast aside that should have held me back, I am disgusted—I loathe myself.

LOUISE (*excitedly*)
Don't blame yourself! Blame me! It's all my fault—my sin! It was I who compelled you, forced you to see into your own heart. . . . You would not confess even to yourself that you loved me, that you had loved me from the first instant! But I, dearest, I saw and felt and knew that all the life I had ever lived was in you! Do you think I would have been so foolish or so courageous as to turn that happiness from me?

GEORGES
'Sh! Speak lower.

LOUISE (*more quietly*)
For more than a month you have been struggling to give me up—I know. For more than a month I have not seen you; for more than a month every day in vain I went to your rooms. And I should have died—I should have *died* if I had not known that you were still in Paris.

GEORGES
Your husband was mistaken in what he said. I did leave Paris for a week; but when he called three weeks ago I had returned.

LOUISE (*tenderly*)
Where did you go—far away—from me?

GEORGES
To my brother's, to borrow money . . . and I returned with ten thousand francs.

LOUISE
Oh, my Georges, you had come to that!

GEORGES
Yes, to that. I had nothing left, but the desperate need of money. . . . For in spite of the oath your husband forced from me, when he saved me—and I was almost a stranger then—saved me from dishonor, the passion for play seized me again. I went back to the club and never left it for three weeks. I won and lost and lost and won and—lost. The right to enjoy myself by any means was the only right I recognized. Blindly I yielded myself to chance, until—and it was only a few hours ago—I found myself without a louis.

LOUISE
Oh!
GEORGES
Then on the spur of the moment I risked one more play . . . as I did three months ago—just on my word.

LOUISE (*anxiously*)
How much?
GEORGES
Twenty thousand francs . . . I lost.

LOUISE
And then?
GEORGES
And then I went home exhausted, wrecked, ruined! At my door I met—*your* husband! "What's the matter?" he asked, and went in with me. I tried to pretend, to sham, to hide my wretchedness from him—but it was no use. For the second time—just think, the second time—he offered to save me. I thought of you—of us—I realized how rotten I was—and—I refused. He insisted; again I refused. He was astonished. Suddenly I thought—suppose he guessed the real motive of my repeated refusals. . . . Everything, anything rather than that the slightest suspicion should come to him! . . . And so I accepted—yes, I accepted, and, after all, it was not from fear for myself—nor for—you; but out of pity for him, an honest man, whose sole happiness is in his honor, and whose disillusion would be so tragic! . . . "Come, Rouve, old man," he said to me, "you must be

yourself again. Thank God that, for the second time, I have come at the right moment. I haven't twenty thousand francs with me—naturally—but come tonight to the opera, and you shall have it."

LOUISE

And so it is to that I owed the pleasure of seeing you tonight at the opera?

GEORGES (*bitterly*)

Yes, Louise, to that.

LOUISE

And he gave you the money?

GEORGES

Yes, during an *entr'acte*. I have it here. (*He touches the inner left pocket of his overcoat.*) Now, Louise, you see why I must say good-bye.

LOUISE

Good-bye? I don't understand.

GEORGES (*almost turning on her*)

What have you come to? . . .

You don't understand?

LOUISE (*decidedly*)

No!

GEORGES

Can't you understand that we must only do what it is perfectly impossible for us not to do?

LOUISE

No!

GEORGES

You do not wish to understand.

LOUISE

So be it, Georges! But stop torturing me! What is it we must do?

GEORGES

Separate. After what your husband—Monsieur de Cheville—has done for me—twice done for me—can I be so low—such a sneak—so much less than a man—as to go on with you? Can you ask me to? We must separate!

(LOUISE is almost beside herself.)

LOUISE (*dangerously*)

Have a care. If you repeat that word, I . . .

GEORGES (*remonstrating*)

Louise! . . .

LOUISE

Listen! Swear to me that tomorrow I shall find you at home. . . .

GEORGES (*hesitating*)

Oh, Louise!

LOUISE

And if I do not find you there I . . .

GEORGES (*realizing her threat, starting to go*)

Alas! I shall be there; but with the hope that you will have reflected; that you will be reasonable or at least prepared to become so.

(*He has reached the door at the back.*)

LOUISE

We shall see. . . . (*She notices a sudden expression of alarm upon GEORGES's face.*) What's the matter?

GEORGES (*in a very low voice*)

Someone has just entered the house . . . your husband . . .

LOUISE (*anxiously*)

Impossible!

GEORGES

Unfortunately not . . . he must have missed his train. . . .

LOUISE

'S-s-s-h— Listen! . . .

GEORGES (*hearing a footstep*)

Good God!

LOUISE (*thoroughly frightened*)

It must be he. . . . What shall we do?

GEORGES (*in despair*)

Louise . . . everything . . . anything rather than for him to know—

(*She opens the door to the dressing-room.*)

LOUISE

Go in there—quick! There is a window on the street . . . hurry. . . .

(GEORGES goes out hastily.)

LOUISE is left alone. She runs to the electric switch and turns off the light. In the darkness she throws herself upon the bed. The door at the back is gently pushed open, as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II—The curtain rises upon a street corner covered with snow. To the left, facing obliquely, is the façade of the de Cheville house. On the left foreground two steps lead up to its front door. At centre is a window of the house, with closed shutters. At the corner is a lighted street lamp. For an instant the

stage is empty, then two watchmen slowly approach from left and come down the stage, talking the while.

SECOND WATCHMAN

As though there were not plenty of reason for becoming discouraged!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Why, how old are you?

SECOND WATCHMAN

Twenty-eight!

FIRST WATCHMAN

And you want to be a sergeant already? . . . Why, look at me, my friend. I'm nigh on to forty, and you see . . .

SECOND WATCHMAN

That proves that you and I have chosen a poor trade, where there is no getting ahead.

FIRST WATCHMAN

Bah! It is like everything else. You must have luck.

(They make a half-turn and stroll toward the Cheville house.)

SECOND WATCHMAN

What would you call luck?

FIRST WATCHMAN

Luck! . . . to pinch a burglar in the act. . . .

SECOND WATCHMAN

That *would* be luck!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Especially if he gave you a dig with a knife.

SECOND WATCHMAN

That *would* count for promotion.

FIRST WATCHMAN

Especially if he didn't kill you!

SECOND WATCHMAN

Of course!

FIRST WATCHMAN *(stopping)*

Only, you've got to be stationed in some part of town where the nights are less quiet.

SECOND WATCHMAN *(also ceasing his walk)*

Doesn't anything ever happen here?

FIRST WATCHMAN

Mighty little! Since the murder of that man's mistress . . . you remember?

SECOND WATCHMAN

Yes, two years and three months ago. . . .

FIRST WATCHMAN

That's the time. . . . Well, since then—nothing!

SECOND WATCHMAN

It's disheartening!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Bah! after all, quiet has its advantages.

SECOND WATCHMAN

Say, let's move on! I'm freezing.

FIRST WATCHMAN

It does nip you tonight!

SECOND WATCHMAN

You bet! it's warmer in there than out here.

(He points to the window, whose shutters at the moment are pushed open violently.)

FIRST WATCHMAN *(stopping and pointing to the window)*

Looks as though someone over there disagreed with you.

(GEORGES throws his leg over the window-sill.) (In a low voice.) What is he up to?

SECOND WATCHMAN *(softly)*

He's going to jump! . . . Look out there! . . .

(GEORGES jumps and lands between the two men.)

FIRST WATCHMAN

Hallo, Monsieur! What are you trying to do?

GEORGES *(seeking to escape)*

Gentlemen, I beg of you, let me . . .

SECOND WATCHMAN *(stopping him)*

Not so fast. . . . Do you live here?

GEORGES

Gentlemen!

FIRST WATCHMAN

Is this your house?

GEORGES *(hesitating)*

Yes. . . .

FIRST WATCHMAN

Ho, ho! That's a yes that's not very certain. Why in the devil do you jump out of windows at half-past one in the morning?

GEORGES *(still trying to pass)*

Gentlemen!

SECOND WATCHMAN

A funny way to come out of your own house!

FIRST WATCHMAN

You can't pretend you didn't want to wake the porter—there ain't any. It is a private house.

SECOND WATCHMAN (*sarcastically*)
Perhaps the gentleman has lost his key!

FIRST WATCHMAN (*turning on him*)

It's no joke! There's something queer about this, and Monsieur had better explain himself.

GEORGES

Gentlemen, I beg of you to let me get away from this house.

SECOND WATCHMAN

What for?

GEORGES

Come with me, if you wish, but I beg you, let us go away. If they should come to that window and see me—God!

SECOND WATCHMAN

Who? . . . They?

FIRST WATCHMAN

And why do you want to get away?

SECOND WATCHMAN

Come . . . explain.

GEORGES

Well, then. . . . The house is not mine!

FIRST WATCHMAN (*pleased with himself*)

Humph! . . . I thought as much. . . . Then if it is not yours—what's the row?

GEORGES

Since you must have it—it is the house of a married woman.

FIRST WATCHMAN (*leering at him*)

And you're her lover!

GEORGES

Well . . . yes! . . . And now, gentlemen!

FIRST WATCHMAN

One moment . . . that's not all. Why did you jump?

GEORGES

Her husband came home unexpectedly . . . we heard him . . . I had just time to escape. . . .

FIRST WATCHMAN

That explains it— Well, I guess you'd better get along.

(GEORGES, *starting toward the right,*

suddenly stops short, in amazement giving a smothered cry.)

FIRST WATCHMAN

What's the matter with you?

(M. DE CHEVILLE *enters, followed by his servant, ANTONIN.*)

GEORGES (*with mingled fear and astonishment*)

You! You, de Cheville . . . but . . .

CHEVILLE (*taken aback*)

What's the matter here?

GEORGES (*bewildered and almost unbelieving*)

You? Is it possible?

CHEVILLE (*astonished in his turn*)

Rouve? . . . Here? . . .

What in the world? . . .

GEORGES (*now in anguish*)

But you!

CHEVILLE

You are surprised? It's perfectly simple. I missed my train—that's all. . . . But what are you doing in front of my house, with these men?

GEORGES (*the truth is beginning to come to him. He speaks brokenly and in great emotion*)

I will tell you. . . . But now we must go into the house. Hurry. I fear something has happened.

CHEVILLE

Something happened? What? . . . Explain. . . .

GEORGES (*slowly*)

Someone has entered the house.

CHEVILLE (*suspiciously*)

Someone. . . . How do you come to know?

GEORGES (*mechanically*)

I was within.

CHEVILLE (*more surprised than angry*)

You, Rouve, in my house! You! For what reason? How? Come, I don't understand. . . .

FIRST WATCHMAN

That's right. He was there—he jumped from that window five minutes ago.

CHEVILLE (*with rising anger*)

That window? What do you mean? (*He looks at the window, sees the open shutter and then turns. He speaks from between his teeth.*) Come, now, Rouve, what does this mean?

GEORGES (*brokenly*)

Ah, I'm afraid, I'm afraid! We mustn't lose another minute! We must go in, search the house! God grant we are not too late.

ANTONIN (*who has gone to the steps*)

The door has been forced.

CHEVILLE

Come, let me go in first! . . .

GEORGES (*to the watchmen, hurriedly*)

Come, come!

They all enter the house, as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE III—*The curtain rises in a moment on LOUISE DE CHEVILLE's room. To the right, in the vague, dim light that shines from the window in the dressing-room, the indistinct form of a MAN is seen moving.*

THE MAN

Good God! When will they stop arguing in front of the house? (*He peers into the dressing-room.*) Ah, a window open here! And on the street, too! (*There is a noise in the house.*) Now, to get out!

(*THE MAN disappears at right.*)

(*The vestibule at the rear of the stage is suddenly lighted. MONSIEUR DE CHEVILLE enters, followed by the four men.*)

CHEVILLE (*shouting*)

Louise, Louise! . . . Where are you? Answer. . . . Answer—Louise—!

(*He switches on the electric light.*

LOUISE is seen lying on the floor, near the bed, which is frightfully disordered. All make an exclamation, and GEORGES groans aloud. ANTONIN approaches and touches the electric bell, which is heard ringing above.)

CHEVILLE (*throwing himself upon the body*)

Louise, Louise, my love—my precious! What is it—what is it? Are you hurt? Oh, it is awful! Look! look!

GEORGES (*in pitiful sorrow*)

She has been strangled!

CHEVILLE (*very slowly*)

She is dead!

GEORGES

Dead! Dead!!

December, 1906—8

CHEVILLE

Her heart has stopped beating! Ah, Louise, my Louise! My dear wife is—dead.

GEORGES (*unbelieving*)

No, no! it is not possible! You must be mistaken. . . .

(*He, too, bends over the body. MADAME LIVOIS appears from above, half undressed.*)

MADAME LIVOIS (*to ANTONIN, as she sees the watchmen*)

The police! . . . Monsieur . . . What is it?

ANTONIN

Madame has just been murdered.

MADAME LIVOIS (*distracted, shouting*)

Murdered! . . . Madame! . . .

Madame! . . .

(*Her voice chokes.*)

CHEVILLE

A doctor! . . . Is there a doctor in the neighborhood?

MADAME LIVOIS

Yes, Monsieur, a few steps away—rue Pergolèse!

CHEVILLE

Run, run! . . . Bring him here!

MADAME LIVOIS

Yes, yes, Monsieur. (*She runs out.*)

GEORGES (*mechanically*)

In the meanwhile we can't leave her like this until the doctor comes.

CHEVILLE

Help me place her on the bed.

GEORGES

Yes, yes! on the bed!

FIRST WATCHMAN

No, no! It is against the rule.

CHEVILLE

How?

GEORGES (*in terror*)

What? Leave her there!

FIRST WATCHMAN

It is absolutely necessary until Monsieur the Commissionnaire has seen for himself. (*To the SECOND WATCHMAN.*) Go and get him. (*He goes out quickly.*)

GEORGES

As for the murderer, he cannot escape us.) He must still be here. Search the house!

FIRST WATCHMAN (*to ANTONIN*)

Come with me!

GEORGES (*speaking aloud, in quiet sorrow*)

Why did I leave her? Why did I leave her?

(*Suddenly at the sound of his voice DE CHEVILLE rises and crosses to GEORGES, who is standing near the chair at right.*)

CHEVILLE (*with menace*)

What were you doing here in my house?

GEORGES (*faltering*)

In . . . your . . . house!

CHEVILLE

Yes! Explain your presence here tonight.

GEORGES

Everything accuses me, and there is nothing you have not the right to suspect.

CHEVILLE

It is not a question of what I have a right to suspect, but of what I insist upon knowing.

GEORGES

What do you wish to know?

CHEVILLE

Your presence here tonight appears to me a monstrous disgrace. It upsets all my conceptions of Louise, it shakes my belief in gratitude. At one blow it destroys the image I had formed of the purity of a woman whom up to now neither I nor anyone had the right to suspect. It makes you to me more despicable, more cowardly, more rotten than I believed a man could be. Your presence you cannot deny; justify it if you can.

GEORGES (*overwrought*)

Yes, I will justify it. (*Pleading.*) But later—tomorrow—I beg you! Oh, not now before her!

CHEVILLE (*coldly, with great force*)

Neither tomorrow nor later! You must answer me now—now—do you hear? . . . What were you doing in my house?

GEORGES

Well, so be it! I will tell you! Yes, I am a cur, a coward! I was here, with Madame de Cheville . . .

(*He falters, and during the rest of the scene, between grief and fear and remorse and shock, his wits leave him.*)

Yes, I was here, and suddenly I

heard a noise. . . . I thought it was you returning . . . and it was not you. It was . . . the murderer. . . .

CHEVILLE (*tensely*)

What were you doing in my house?

GEORGES

Yes, yes! it is abominable, it is . . . (*he shudders*) . . . that I should be found in your house, that I should have come here, I . . . I . . . who owe you everything! But . . . and don't think that I am trying to excuse myself. . . . I tell you this because it is true . . . because I must tell you. . . . I came simply because . . . (*He hesitates.*) . . . I intended to leave Paris. . . . I was about to go away.

You understand.

(*Suddenly he realizes what he is saying and checks himself.*)

Ah! . . . What am I saying?

I am a cad! . . . To accuse her now. . . . I . . . I . . . who did not know how to defend her. (*He cries out to the body.*) Forgive me—forgive me!

CHEVILLE (*very slowly*)

So—it is true—then? . . . You were—her—lover?

GEORGES

Ah! . . . I loved her from the first and I don't know whether my remorse in having betrayed her is greater than my agony in having lost her.

CHEVILLE

Cur!

(*He is about to throw himself upon GEORGES, but the latter has sunk upon the chair, sobbing and burying his head in his hands.*)

GEORGES (*in agony*)

Yes, yes! . . . So much the worse, so much the worse now . . . I will tell you all! . . . Since I did not know how to protect her I shall not deny our love. Yes, I loved her. . . . I loved her, do you hear? . . . And now do with me as you will. It is your right.

MADAME LIVOIS (*entering*)

It is in this room, gentlemen.

(THE COMMISSARY, THE DOCTOR and the SECOND WATCHMAN enter.)

THE COMMISSARY

Gentlemen! . . . (He and THE DOCTOR go straight to the bed.) Oh! . . . frightful! . . . poor woman! . . . Well, doctor?

THE DOCTOR

It is the end. . . . (He rises.)
She was choked with such violence that the larynx is ruptured.

There is silence.

THE COMMISSARY

Are you Monsieur de Cheville?

(DE CHEVILLE nods; THE COMMISSARY turns to GEORGES.)

And you, sir?

GEORGES (rising)

Georges Rouve.

THE COMMISSARY

It was you who were in the house at the moment when . . . ?

GEORGES

Yes.

THE COMMISSARY (to CHEVILLE)

Do you know Monsieur?

CHEVILLE (tense still, with an idea growing on him)

I used to know him . . . yes. . . .

THE COMMISSARY (to GEORGES)

Monsieur, you are in a position to furnish us with most important evidence with regard to the crime which has just been committed. You will kindly answer the questions which I shall ask you as soon as we have completed our cursory examination.

(He sees the FIRST WATCHMAN, who has just entered, followed by ANTONIN.)

Ah, have you searched the house?

THE FIRST WATCHMAN

Yes, sir!

THE COMMISSARY

And?

THE FIRST WATCHMAN

Nothing . . . no one . . .

THE COMMISSARY

At least you found some trace . . . some clue that may put us on the track?

THE FIRST WATCHMAN

No clue—nothing, Monsieur.

THE COMMISSARY

I shall notify headquarters without delay.

CHEVILLE (quietly)

It is useless.

THE COMMISSARY (surprised)

Useless!

CHEVILLE (deliberately)

Yes; the murderer is here.

THE COMMISSARY

What do you mean?

CHEVILLE (after a long pause)

He . . . is . . . in . . . this . . . room.

THE COMMISSARY (in amazement)

In this room?

CHEVILLE (pausing again, pointing to GEORGES)

There he stands!

GEORGES (absolutely aghast)

I . . . I . . . ?

CHEVILLE (ruthless and inexorable)

Who, then, should it be?

GEORGES (protesting)

You know . . . you know well that it is not I!

(DE CHEVILLE is silent.)

THE COMMISSARY

Monsieur . . . take care, so grave a charge. . . .

GEORGES

I . . . why should I have—?

CHEVILLE

In order to steal!

GEORGES (shrieking)

To steal? . . . I steal! . . .

I . . . How can you? . . .

Steal . . . I . . . This is

madness. . . . How dare you

accuse? . . . Ah, Monsieur, you

have a right to your revenge, and—

I have already told you, I belong to

you: but not this way, Monsieur, not this!

CHEVILLE (in a firm voice)

What are you insinuating—you—thing? To save yourself you would

smirch the name of Madame de Cheville?

Madame de Cheville was a pure woman;

you killed her in order to rob her.

GEORGES (in a loud voice)

But this is madness!

THE COMMISSARY (to DE CHEVILLE)

Your charge is serious. . . . You must have proof.

CHEVILLE

I have it . . . (to THE COMMISSARY.) This morning I handed to

Madame de Cheville the sum of twenty thousand francs in bank-notes.

GEORGES (*beginning to understand*)

What . . . you are capable—!

(*Mechanically, his hand travels to the pocket where he previously placed the envelope with the money. THE COMMISSARY sees the gesture.*)

CHEVILLE

I will be more precise: These bank-notes were in two packages of ten thousand francs each, contained in a yellow envelope stamped with my coat-of-arms. The envelope, before my own eyes, was placed by Madame de Cheville in the upper drawer of that table.

(*He points to her dressing-table.*)

GEORGES

This is fiendish! You know you lie.

CHEVILLE (*implacable*)

It is very easy to prove the contrary. (*To THE COMMISSARY.*) Search him!

THE COMMISSARY

So be it! (*At a sign from him FIRST WATCHMAN approaches and holds GEORGES, while THE COMMISSARY proceeds to search him.*)

GEORGES (*resisting*)

But, this money, you handed it to me yourself!

CHEVILLE (*smiling grimly*)

That of course is very easy to pretend.

(*Meanwhile THE COMMISSARY has quickly found and taken possession of the envelope. THE WATCHMAN releases GEORGES and steps aside.*)

THE COMMISSARY (*to CHEVILLE*)
Is this it?

CHEVILLE

Yes, count it!

(*THE COMMISSARY takes out the two packages of bank-notes and examines them.*)

GEORGES (*to CHEVILLE*)

You dare deny that it was you yourself who . . . ?

CHEVILLE (*with emphasis*)

Certainly I deny it.

GEORGES (*shrieking*)

You lie, you lie!

CHEVILLE

What evidence do you offer in defense?

(*GEORGES is silent, stupefied.*)

THE COMMISSARY

You do not answer? . . . The thing is clear . . . (*To THE WATCHMAN.*) Come, take him.

(*THE WATCHMAN goes to GEORGES.*)

GEORGES (*to THE WATCHMAN*)

Hands off!

(*He suddenly draws a revolver from his pocket and shoots himself. THE WATCHMAN catches him as he falls. THE DOCTOR, coming forward, glances at him.*)

THE DOCTOR

He is dead!

CHEVILLE (*as he looks at the body of his wife*)

He has confessed!

THE CURTAIN FALLS



IMPOSSIBLE

MRS. GIDDINGS—If I give you this letter to post I suppose you'll carry it in your pocket a month.

GIDDINGS—How in the world could I do that when you go through my pockets every night?

THE COMIN' THOO OF JOHN HENRY

By Anna B. A. Brown

"I SHO is late, ain't I?" Pearlline queried pleasantly as she tried to hang up her sunbonnet, tie in her apron and take the coffee-mill from me all at the same time.

"Yas'm, I reckon you'se clean put out, fer it's 'way atter seven, ain't it?" she added, anticipating any reproof I might offer. "Mammy 'lowed as how you sho oughter beat me, but I knowed you wouldn't when you erremembered yistiddy was baptizin' over to Bethel. Yas'm, an' all dis time Aunt M'lindy's John Henry ain't come thoo yit. Hamme the mill, Miss Emma. I gwine grin' de coffee."

Pearlline stopped for breath and I edged in the remark:

"But I thought John Henry was to be baptized, and how can they be baptized until they have professed and 'come thoo'?"

"Yas'm, they inginerally comes thoo fust," and her voice rose above the rasping of the mill, "but John Henry back-slode an' Bruver Jeremiah wrastled in prayer with 'im 'most all yistiddy evenin' atter de fuss, an' mos' er las' night, an' up twel three this mo'nin'. We all got plumb tiud out an' come home an' lef' 'em dar. . . . Yas'm, Bruver Jeremiah he sho wuz wrasslin' in prayer fer dat nigger."

"What fuss?" I asked, when the sound of the grinding was low.

"De fuss 'bout Unc' Simon's Ananias whut wuz tuck up fer stealin'."

Pearlline disappeared head-first into the flour barrel, and a cloud of white dust circled like a nimbus around her head as the sifter whirled an accompaniment to—

"Swing er-low, sweet charryot.
Er-comin' fer ter ca'y me ho-ome——"

I knew the only way to get information from Pearlline was to sift out all the chaff of her wordy monologues and finally discover the kernel of fact in the bottom of the sieve. Some time the story would be forthcoming, so I perched myself on the table and waited.

"I'm sho gwine ter have dese yere biscuits light, Miss Emma. Yas'm, you see John Henry wucked over in a race-track befo' he perferred, an' Bruver Jeremiah an' Aunt M'lindy an' dem wuz everlastin'ly werryin' 'im 'bout how wicked it wuz ter be in sich an ongodly place, an' dey 'lowed he sho would be brought ter repentance. But John Henry he ain't let on no repentin' twel his clo'es wuz stole. Yas'm, somebody went thoo de boys' rooms at de track one night an' tuck John Henry's Sunday clo'es out'n 'is trunk. Dey wuz sho fine clo'es, too. . . . Miss Emma, please ma'am, hamme er teaspoon. I got some er dis yere buttermilk sloshed out on de table. Thanky, ma'am. . . . You might be settin' de ham outen de ice-box. . . . Yas'm, de pants wuz striped, an' de coat wuz blue, an' de ves' wuz white wid red dots on it. Dey tooken 'is Sunday shirt, too, de blue-striped one, an' 's cuffs an' cuff-buttons. W'y, dem buttons had great big diamonds in 'em. Pappy said dey cost ever' bit er fifty cents."

"John Henry wuz might'ly put out over dem clo'es, he sho wuz. An' Bruver Jeremiah, he showed 'imas how it wuz jes' er plain jedgment er de Lawd 'count er 'is evil ways an' his er consortin' wid onbelievers De

whole chu'ch tooken it up, an' John Henry said ef bein' er onbeliever made 'im lose 'is clo'es, bein' a believer oughter make 'im fin' 'em, so he per-fessed las' fo'th Sunday. Ever'body wuz sho he had come thoo, an' you jes' oughter er seen Aunt M'lindy! She jes' shouted all her clo'es off, 'scusin' her petticoat an' underwais'. H'm, h'm! She sholy wuz fine! It tuck seven er de sisters ter hol' 'er, an' even den she upsot de mo'ners' bench an' spilled Miss Haskins's twinse out in de straw.

"Looks lak dese yere two pans er biscuit gwine be a mighty little, but I reckon it's 'cause I'm so hongry mahself.

"Peared lak dat baptizin' wuz goin' ter be de fines' yit. De creek had riz up good down at de baptizin'-hole an' dere wuz eight yethers, 'scusin' John Henry, ter be baptized.

"Dat crowd yistiddy wuz one er de bigges' ones I ever seed. All Mount Moriah wuz dere, all fum Pisgeh an' t'ree waggin'-loads fum 'way over ter Shakerag. An' de way dem gals wuz dressed! H'm, h'm! I looked mighty fine mahself, Miss Emma. I wore dat white umpire dress you gimme las' week, an' sewed red roses all roun' de low neck. Jim he say I look lak er rose mahself. . . . Git off'n de table, Miss Emma, an' lemme beat de aigs. You reckon fo' slices er ham'll be ernough? . . .

"Yas'm, it wuz er fine day, an' Bruver Jeremiah he said it wuz one er de mos' upliftin' occasions sence John de Baptis' et up de locusses whut wuz er-crawlin' eroun' de wilderness an' come down ter de Jordan ter baptize de Lawd.

"But you know, Miss Emma, I can't he'p er-laughin' when I t'ink er Aunt Marcellena Sale when she wuz dipped!"

"Aunt Marcellena!" I interrupted from my seat on the wood-box, whither I had fled to escape Pearlina's free-and-easy method of beating eggs. "Why, I thought Aunt Marcellena was baptized last Summer."

"Oh, yas'm, she wuz. She has ter be baptized ever' Summer, she back-

slides jes' dat constant. But she's sholy the bes' shouter anywheres 'roun' an' she baptizes good, too. It allus takes two er de deacons ter he'p Bruver Jeremiah put 'er under, an' she sho do splosh! She comes up jes' er-pawin' de water, an' er-hollerin', an' she inginerally goes off inter tranches time she git out on de bank. Ain't you never heard her shoutin' up yere, Miss Emma? Miss Maureen say she kin hear 'er clear ercross de creek. She allus do draw a big crowd when she's dipped over agin.

"Dey dipped her yistiddy jes' atter dey dipped dat yaller Mose whut wucks at de Smalleys'. Mose didn' shout more'n nothin' when he wuz dipped; jes' tu'n an' walk outen de water 'thout er wud an' stood on de bank ter watch de yethers. Dey had er powerful sloshin' gittin' Aunt Marcellena dipped, an' she jumped out on de bank hollerin':

"I seed 'im! Lawd, I seed 'im down under de water! I seed 'im! Glory! Hallelujah! Marse Jesus is down dar; I seed 'im!" Pearlina swayed her slender figure to imitate Aunt Marcellena's wild shouting.

"An' all de sisters, dey come eroun' shoutin' 'Hallelujah! an' a-peepin' in de water, an' Bruver Jeremiah an' Deacon Snow whut wuz in de water kinder wriggle dey laigs lak dey feared de Lawd wuz down dar an' gwine ter bite 'em. Den dat yaller Mose he drawl out jes' ez sollum:

"Aw, dat wan't de Lawd Jesus down dar, Aunt Marcellena! Dat wuz jes' er mud turkle settin' on er gum log. I seed 'im too.' An' Aunt Marcellena wuz jes' dat mad! H'm, h'm! She sho look wil' at Mose. . . . Pull yer skirt back, Miss Emma, an' lemme run dis yere pan er biscuits in de stove, an' yo' breakfas' 'll be ready in er minnit."

"But John Henry?" I ventured.

"Lawd, yas'm, I'se er-comin' ter John Henry. You see, dey lef' John Henry las', 'count er his bein' sech er sinner, an' dey wuz wantin' ever'body ter git dar in time ter see 'im dipped. Bruver Jeremiah, he made a talk er-

bout de sheep an' de sheep-fol' bin, an' de bruvers an' sisters an' dem on de bank dey shout an' moan twel John Henry he look real proud. Dey dip 'im under oncet an' jes' ez dey start ter dip 'im ergin he tried ter juck loose, an' dey jes' nachelly had ter fo'ce 'im under. Nex' time he come up he yell out:

"Dar he is! Dar he is! Bless de Lawd, dar he is! an' started to'd de bank. Ever'body went ter shoutin', an' Bruver Jeremiah an' de deacons tuck atter John Henry an' tried ter drag 'im back ter dip 'im de las' time. But he wouldn't be drug back. H'm, h'm! He jes' kep' er-climbin' up de bank er-yellin', 'Dar he is!' an' ever'body thought he mus' er seed de Lawd on de bank stiddy er in de water, an' dey all kinder scatter eroun' an' look ter see ef de Lawd could er-slipped in unbeknownst ter 'em. Aunt Marcellena, she holler out:

"I knowed it, I knowed it! I knowed he wuz here! I tell you I seed 'im in de water. John Henry, John Henry, I seed 'im too!"

"An' dat yaller Mose kep' puttin' in 'is mouth, er-sayin':

"I tell you 'twan't nothin' but er turkle settin' on er gum log. I seed 'im.' An' de deacons wuz all but tearin' John Henry's ol' baptizin' clo'es off'n 'im tryin' ter drag 'im back ergin, an' John Henry all de time jes' er-crawlin' up de bank.

"Dar he is! Dar he is! he yell ergin. 'An' dem's my breeches, an' dat's my coat, an', bless de Lawd, dem's my cuff-buttons!' An' John Henry he run right thoo de crowd an' jump at Unc' Simon's Ananias, an' yer oughter er see dat nigger run! He jes' cut out down de road, Ananias did, an' John Henry wet an' bar-foot right atter 'im. An' den ever'body knowed whut wuz de matter. Dat Ananias—he ain't never been no 'count sence his daddy went an' had 'im eddicated—he done stole John Henry's clo'es an' ain't had no better sense 'n ter wear 'em ter de baptizin'.

"Lawd, but it wuz er time! Bruver Jeremiah an' de deacons wuz er-yellin'

at John Henry ter come back an' finish bein' baptized, an' Aunt Marcellena wuz havin' er spell an' er-goin' off inter er tranche, an' all de res' uv 'em whut wuzn't hol'in' Aunt Marcellena tuck out atter Ananias an' John Henry. Didn't you see 'em pass yere, Miss Emma? Dey sho wuz cuttin' dirt up de Big House hill.

"Dey ketched Ananias in de new-goun' back er Mister Major Thompson's, an' John Henry wuz fer killin' 'im den an' dar, but Uncle Tom an' dem begged 'im off an' tol' 'im thar'd be no trial fer us ter go to ef he done dat. So he leggo uv Ananias an' dey tooken 'im off on de kyars an' put 'im in jail somewhurs.

"Bruver Jeremiah, he'd ketched up by dis time, an' he try ter make John Henry come on back an' finish bein' baptized, but John Henry he said no. He said he'd done perfessed an' wuz saved now. He hel' ef his clo'es wuz tooken because he wuz er sinner, dey mus' er been sent back on Ananias because he wuz redeemed, an' ef he wuz redeemed what wuz de use o' mo' baptizin'? But Bruver Jeremiah, he argify as how John Henry had murder in his heart an' wuzn't yet cleansded fum sin, an' so dey tuck 'im whe'r or no, back over ter Bethel an' prayed an' wrassled all night over 'im. Dey tuck Aunt Marcellena over dar, too, hopin' mebbe she'd up an' have her vision. She went off inter three tranches an' testified, but it ain't seemed ter bring no light ter John Henry; an' Bruver Jeremiah, he's jes' dat put out— Lawd, Miss Emma, ain't dat dem biscuits I smell, a-burn-in'? . . . No'm, dey ain't hurt, but I sholy wuz skeered. Now, please ma'am, run on in de dinin'-room an' call Mas' Joe whilst I dishes up de ham."

Pearline clattered down the big tray and began placing her dishes on it. As I passed out she called:

"Oh, Miss Emma, you ain't mindin' ef I sends little Vaseline up yere to wash de dishes an' chu'n, is you? I wanter run down ter Bethel soon ez I kin ter see ef John Henry's come thoo yit!"

BARRINGTON

By Mary Glascock

JOHN BARRINGTON, with legs spread apart, hands in pockets, pipe in mouth, stood on the edge of the marsh, looking up at the sky.

A storm was driving in from the South. Sullen clouds were massing, their blackness swiftly blotting out the fierce red burn of the sunset, and finally melting into the immensity of the gray-green stretch of marsh. The tules cringed and twisted in the onrush of the wind. Barrington took his pipe from his mouth.

"Southeaster—uncertain shooting tomorrow," he reflected.

And then he set his teeth upon the pipe-stem, curling one hand around a match to save the flickering spark. A distinct ripple fluttered the surface of the Big Slough that cut tortuously through tule and grass, its tributaries, like tentacles, writhing through the marsh and marked by brown, stiff cattails, until lost in the flat distance. Small ponds gleamed red as the sky, then darkened to ink.

Barrington had come down by the four-thirty to Willow Lodge for a shoot. The keeper had telephoned that the ducks were flying—canvasbacks plentiful. Barrington was a new member of the club, and Dane was to have met him on the train, but hadn't shown up. There was no later train, and here he was, landed in the largeness of this desolation, alone in a wilderness of gleaming marsh, under a sky that promised storm. He needed good, convivial company to keep down thought. He had looked forward to a night with Dane. Dane had a turn for amusing, and worked off his stunts with naturalness and zest. Now, a crane, white-

splashed against the murky sky on the brim of sedgy marsh, was Barrington's sole company.

He strode along the firm ground, edged by wiry marsh grass, which stretched sandy and bare to the foot-hills rolling away into the sky. Dusk was thickening. He liked the weird dreariness of the place; the bigness of it lifted him up from the littleness of himself. He was rather glad, after all, that Dane had not come. Then jerking his cap down well on his head he turned up his coat collar, and settled himself more sturdily upon his legs against the wind. He lighted another match; the wind puffed it out; and the crane, impassive, stood watching. As he moved, the great, stolid bird moved along in front of him, always keeping a safe distance, and curiously eying him.

A huge Indian mound, abruptly reared on the rim of the marsh, was the only elevation in that dreary flatness. He had heard Dane speak of it; and arrow-heads, beads, an old flat fore-headed skull, and a stone pestle and mortar crudely fashioned, which ornamented the bunk-room, told of excavations. He decided to walk to it—it was, perhaps, a quarter-mile away—when a peculiar sound was blown to him from the east. His pipe went out; he stood and listened. The crane, too, raised its head.

A tremulous whistling cleft the air—soft, yet strong. A rush of wings beat in time to the quiver of marsh-grasses, the sway of tules, the lapping of the waters swishing among their stems. Barrington looked up. Ducks in countless thousands were cutting the

air against the glowering sky, making of the air a palpitating, throbbing, rhythmical thing. They came nearer, and the voices of their flight grew sonorous and vibrant of strange and complex melody. The beat and rush, swish and whirr of wing filled space. There was in it the music that was born when the earth was young. Barrington held his breath. They settled, with long, downward swoops, on the water, and silence, silence almost of the infinite, held this mysterious largeness of swiftly falling shadow.

"Wagner must have hunted on the Baltic marshes!" he exclaimed, forgetting to relight his pipe. "The motif of the Valkyrie was in their wings. There's where he got it!"

He slapped his hand on his knee and turned toward the Indian mound. He could not have gone into the shack just then; the spell of marsh, and sky, and space, and whirring wings was fast upon him; the music of primordial things was singing in his brain. Harsh, strong and clean the salt smell of the sea came to him, and he drew it in with his breath. Suddenly the white crane lost itself in the darkness; Barrington was alone, and he liked being alone. Recognizing within himself a certain kinship to this vast loneliness, he stretched out his arms, took off his cap, and let big drops of rain spatter upon his bared head. He exulted in it; he, Barrington, a product of the utmost polishing of twentieth-century modernity, felt a touch on a hitherto unknown chord of his heart, which answered the vibration of the birds' wings.

He had joined the club primarily to get away from weariness of things in general, and, incidentally, through Dane's persuasions, because it was primitive. Too much civilization had "gotten upon his nerves," as he expressed it; also Alice Trent had refused him. "More hurt pride than heart," he mused to himself, but was not sure; it was much more comforting to lie, even to oneself. The smell of pungent, acrid marsh grass drowned the memory of the perfume of Alice Trent's

violet-scented hair. He would stay here a week—a month. It would be easy to forget, with a gun and a pipe—man's best company.

He stopped suddenly. Against the sky—it was so dark that he could barely see, and even by straining his eyes could not see clearly—a figure of a woman came from apparently nowhere. Gray as the sky, it stood on the old Indian mound, almost melting into its background. Lithe and well poised, her skirts blown about her in pliant curves, she stood motionless. A superstitious shiver chilled his flesh. "These Indian mounds are said to be haunted," he thought, and smiled, amused at the thought. It was growing dark; the drops had thickened into a shower. Marsh, sky and land were a vast monochrome of black. The hoarse honking of geese as they winged landward made him start. He turned and looked again; the figure had faded from sight.

"My nerves are out of whack!" he muttered, and went toward the shack, to which a blurred, yellow light pathed the way through the willows.

Dane had told him of the surly keeper, a drunken fellow who had seen better days, but he had never mentioned that there was a woman about. In fact, he had said that there wasn't a soul nearer than the station, four miles away.

"All hallucination!" he said to himself, and stooped to scrape the mud from his shoes on the rotting sill of the shack. The blast of heat from the little, tight, round stove was grateful as it met him. He rolled off his wet coat and pulled on a sweater, sat down on a three-legged stool, filled his pipe afresh and took up the bottle of whisky which he had left on the table. The liquor did not seem to pour. He tilted it farther; a thin stream trickled from the bottle, and then stopped altogether.

Barrington laughed to himself.

He drew a novel from his pocket and turned the leaves, but could not read. He went to the tiny-paned window and peered out. The blackness was so

dense that he could not see through the willows, which swayed, formless. The voice of the storm threatened, shrieked, implored, over the marsh, and then whined and pawed at the crack between the sill and the door, which rattled uneasily.

"No shooting in the morning," Barrington grumbled, and turned in for the night.

The shack creaked and groaned. Willow branches, heavy and sodden, rasped the shingles over his head, and drops of rain, forcing themselves through cracks, spattered and hissed on the hot iron of the stove.

Alice Trent would turn from this, as she had turned from the honest story of his life. He smiled grimly at the recollection of her shuddering as he had told it to her. How he had loved her in her smug, warm softness, smothered in the eiderdown of life! "If you hadn't told me of your indiscretion"—he had called it by an uglier name—"it wouldn't have made any difference," she had said. If he hadn't told her!

He had thought to begin his new life fair and square, made open by honest confession. He had sinned long ago, when the fire of youth burned hot in his veins, and had repented before its ashes had grown cold. She had said that she loved him. She must honor him, he had said, and it was her right to know of the quagmire through which he had sunk the firmer foundation of his maturer character.

Lying in his coarse, gray blankets, with the wind and rain lashing into fury, and the rise of the tide gurgling, like the outgoing breath of a drowning man, he smiled ironically at the recollection of his chivalry. He recalled every word. How it had cut then!

"But your life isn't clean," she had said.

"It has been cleansed through the blood of repentance," he had answered.

"But—but—a past is such bad form," she had stammered.

She had shrunk at his touch, he remembered, in her pink-and-white softness. He had been stunned.

"Then you mean that you can't forgive?" he had asked.

She had covered her face with her hands. "I don't know," she had said. Then he had stormed out—he remembered how angrily—saying, "If you are not strong enough to bear my past with me, and help me to keep my life pure and clean, we'd better say good-bye."

And he had said good-bye.

It was months, but he remembered every word. First, he thought that he would go to the devil. Then he squared his shoulders, and kept on with the fight, but he cut himself away from the companionship of women; he would have none of it. Later he met Dane; Dane made up for a great deal. The imagined form of that other woman, standing firm, unyielding, before the storm, had vivified memories of Alice Trent. If Alice had been what the wraith woman typified! He rolled over in his bunk, the feline whine of the storm in his ears, and fell asleep, with memories trailing into dreams of a great forgiveness for men and women alike who repented. The figure on the mound, whether a creation of his imagination or not, brought him peace. He sensed a feeling of companionship even in this wild, and slept until roused by a pounding on his door.

"Breakfast's ready," the keeper's voice growled. A single small lamp gleamed like a watchful eye in the centre of the table. The keeper lurched out of the back door upon Barrington's entrance, and snapped between his teeth, "The boat will be ready at the slough in a half-hour."

Breakfast steamed upon the table, spread with a clean, coarse cloth; and the dishes, blue-and-white china, though common, had the refinement of prettiness. The tins hanging on the kitchen wall were polished, and shone with red reflections from the crackling wood fire. Barrington ate leisurely and heartily, and then went to the door.

Of course it was dark, a darkness thick and palpable. The rain had stopped, and here and there watery stars glimmered through breaks in the

clouds. The grass was wet and dripping, as drawing on his oilskin coat and high rubber boots, pipe in mouth, he stepped out. Soft and slushy, the ground oozed water, the marsh was a filled sponge. With lantern in bow, the boat lay ready. His gun and cartridges were piled at the stern; and a figure much bundled in oilskins, with hat too large and pulled low, waited for him, oars in hand. Barrington hardly glanced at him, the man so unmistakably sought to be ignored. Barrington disliked surliness. It gave him a pleasant warmth about the cockles of his heart to be liked. He believed in the wide equality of the American race; and when he extended the right hand of fellowship he liked to feel it responsively grasped.

He stepped in without speaking, and offered a cigar to the rower, who refused by a shake of the head, and pulled steadily along the twisting slough. A heap of decoys lay between him, and the rower, whose stroke, while firm, was surprisingly light and quick. Barrington, himself an oarsman, noted this with approbation, but made no comment. It was not yet daylight when the rower slowed up, pointed to the blind, a sunken barrel in the middle of a low bunch of tules, and threw out the decoys.

"If you wish to be taciturn, I'll humor you," Barrington thought, and did not turn nor speak to the figure in the boat.

The ducks were rising, numberless, with the dull roar of distant thunder from slough and pond. A long, low yellow bar spread along the east, a glimpsing of coming day as he raised his gun; he did not hear the slipping away of the boat. The pale, yellow light widened and leaped high in the heavens, putting to flight the lowering clouds, tearing them into filmy flecks of gold. The tules stood straight and stiff in the morning light. It was cold, biting cold, but Barrington stopped only to slip cartridges into his gun. The morning flight had begun and the ducks were flying low. It was no longer quantity he aimed for, and he

fell to picking out canvasbacks and to counting the splashes as they dropped into the water. The dog, that he had brought with him, an ordinary-looking brute, was well trained, and Barrington lost few of his birds. Only at noon, when the feeble sun had warmed his stiffened body, cramped from his crouching position, he climbed out of the barrel. The day's sport was over, and he was hungry, beastly hungry. He looked around for the boat; it had gone. Then he stood up and stretched himself.

Dane would be envious of his luck, he thought. He laughed and patted the dog, asleep in the sun. After his pipe, he threw himself down by the dog, and he, too, fell asleep.

How long he slept, he did not know. Wakened by a dash of water in his face, he hurriedly rose to his feet. The wind was coming with gusty and increasing force. The sky was filled with scurrying clouds from which rain fell in slanting lines, and through which the sun showed pale, far down in the west. The dog whined and ran uneasily along the edge of the slough. Then he crept to the feet of the man and, pointing his nose upward, howled. Barrington looked around. Where before had been a limitless reach of marsh grass dotted with tules, now showed gleams of moving, broadening water. The Big Slough, whipped by the growing wind, carried white-topped waves that churned against the banks. Others followed that leaped the banks.

Barrington started. He had not thought of danger before. The actions of the dog became all at once invested with a deadly significance. The rising tide, backed by a heavy southeaster, was flooding the marsh; the water was already up to his ankles. Anxiously he looked up the slough. There was no boat in sight. He had hardly expected there would be; it was doubtful to him if a light hunting-boat could live in such a storm-swept rush of water. He thrust his hands into the pockets of his hunting-coat. Only ten cartridges remained. At intervals of ten seconds the sharp crack of his moun-

twelve rang out, to be lost in the howl of the wind. When the last cartridge was gone he mechanically blew the smoke from the gun and closed it with a snap. Darkness was gathering, and the water still rising. For a moment he was dazed. The cold sapped his strength, the utter loneliness unnerved him. Then the deathless courage that comes of strong manhood asserted itself. He pulled himself together, as he had his gun, with a snap, and deliberately began his preparations for a fight for life. He would not die like a coward. He drove the barrel of the gun deep into the tough fiber of the marsh—the gun was useless except as an anchor—took a turn of the duck-strap around it, slipped down the tops of his rubber boots, so that he might easily rid himself of them if it came to the worst, for like reason unbuttoned his heavy hunting-coat, grasped with one hand the protruding gunstock, inserting the other into the collar of the dog—it was swimming now—turned his back to the impact of the gale, and set himself with grim patience to await the outcome. A higher wave left a salt, brackish taste, bitter against his lips. The same wave washed the yelping dog into the slough, where Barrington, leaning over, could see a yellow speck, tossed, gasping, yet swimming for life.

The ducks were swarming to bed again. The whirr, the throb, the sonorous swish of their wings beat the air with the rush of doom. Slowly, slowly through the din of wings and wind, and dashing spume of sea, stole a sound. Through his numbing senses the call of the Valkyrie rang wild and shrill. He heard the swift tread of their steeds—the spear was pointed at his breast—they would bear him to Valhalla. His heart vaguely stirred at the call. He turned his head; his hands clutched the submerged gunstock tighter. Again came a muffled sound, human, and his heart leaped at the cut of struggling oars. Or was it the rattling of the tules? They had given so many tongues to his listening. The agony of hope, when despair had

folded him under her wings, made him tremble, relaxed the tensi of the nerve strain—unmanned him. The Valkyrie were calling; it was but a softer note in their eerie shriek. It was of no use caviling about oar-strokes! Yet he roused himself to listen and watch.

A lean, dark boat labored into sight, fighting the waves which it flung from it on either side. The wind turned it in the current, and the hungry water tore at its sides. It was just light enough for him to see, indistinctly, the figure at the oars battling to steady it. A wave dashed the boat past him. He held his senses with a last despairing grip. Another supreme effort, and the boat grazed him. As it swung alongside, he, dimly aware of its presence and conscious that safety lay that way, seized the gunwale. He remembered hazily that he had been hunting, and that down in the water, somewhere, there was a gun imbedded in the marsh with a duck-strap holding many ducks twisted around it. Groping, he found the gun, and, tearing it from its marshy fastening, tumbled it and the ducks into the boat. Holding the boat with both hands, he crawled over the gunwale, rolled quickly and fell heavily on his back in the stern, where he lay like a log. He was half-conscious of a suppressed scream, and knew that the boat rocked dangerously in the wash, and that a sharp rattle of oars as of a rower moved, of imminent peril, to a sudden and unusual effort. As the boat righted, he felt that a hand was holding a flask to his lips, and he drank. The fiery spirit carried life. It was liquid fire that ran through every vein, and it brought, with warmth, recollection and wrath. He sat up suddenly.

"Careful!" said a low voice.

"Why, in the name of God, didn't you come before?" he demanded savagely.

The splash of oars was the only reply.

Barrington glowered angrily at the figure in front of him.

"Why—?" he again demanded. "God! it's a woman."

The wind had blown the oilskin hood

from her face. White and haggard through the tan, it showed dragged lines of exhaustion and dread. Her slender, muscular figure drooped wearily as she held to the oars, but the eyes that looked into his were clear and brave.

"Why," he faltered, "why did you come through this storm to save me?"

"To save my father's honor; you were a charge upon it," the girl answered.

"And your father?"

"Is the keeper."

He leaned forward and took the oars from her hands.

"Change places with me," he said curtly. "Steady there!" as the girl silently obeyed. "Now keep the boat trimmed, and give me the course."

Progress was slow, for it required all of his skill to counterbalance his lack of unrecovered strength. The girl, covered by a blanket that he had thrown about her, sat silent.

"I wonder what became of the dog," said Barrington. "Poor brute, he was swept away."

"The dog swam home, almost dead—that was how I knew."

Barrington watched her curiously and thoughtfully as she sat with slender tanned hands resting on her knees, her head bent forward in an attitude of utter weariness.

What was it she had said? To save her father's honor! That was the keynote of a heroism as rare as it was admirable. And it had all been done with such honest bravery and forgetfulness of self. Unconsciously within the secret processes of Barrington's mind there was being fashioned an ideal of womanhood that was altogether new and sweet.

"I rowed you down this morning," the girl added after a silence.

"You?"

"Yes. I'm used to rowing. I'm out in all sorts of weather on the slough, when the men are not down. My father—was not well enough to come." Her eyes lowered, and a thin flash of color crossed her face.

"Were you on the Indian mound last night?" he asked.

She nodded. "I thought that it was too late for you. Father never allows me to go out until after dark if anyone is down. We live in the shed back of the house. No one knows that I'm here. Now, I suppose that we'll have to go. If the others know, we'll have to move again," she said dejectedly.

"There's no reason for their knowing," Barrington answered shortly, the oars slipping in his stiffened hands.

The girl went on, forcing herself to the words; she felt that the situation demanded an explanation, though the man had not asked for one.

"Father got better and drove the buckboard to the station for a man who telegraphed he was coming down on the four-thirty. He was dazed when he hitched up, and I had to help him with the straps. When I watched him drive off I felt uneasy. Then the dog crawled out of the water to my feet. I was afraid that something had happened, but father was too far to call. I went to look for the boat; it was there. After that I went to the kitchen to get supper, and I listened. There was no sound in the bunk-room. I pushed open the door; no one was there, and I knew that you must still be out on the marsh. Before that I thought you were in the Lodge, that father had brought you home at noon. I was frightened, for in a big southeaster the very high tide covers the marsh, and I felt that you were in danger. I came for you. There was nothing else to do."

The girl looked down in the boat.

"You risked your life for me," Barrington said, his voice unsteady. "I haven't a friend in the world who would have done that for me. Do you know the chances you took?" He shuddered. "Few men would have taken them."

"I did my duty," she answered simply. "I would have done as much for anybody."

"You are——?"

"Anne Carewe," she said as she jumped from the boat and, fastening it to its stake, disappeared into the dark.

Barrington slowly, stiffly followed. Pains darted through his body. The hand that had grasped the gunstock would not unbend. He staggered against the door and it fell open, the knob turned by a hand from within.

"Barrington!" a voice cried.

It sounded to him as if it came from across the marsh. He was nearer to losing consciousness than he had ever been in his life.

"Why, old fellow—why——"

Barrington's eyes, red-rimmed from the salt-spray, blinked in the sudden light. The keeper slunk into a corner, his terror-stricken face turned appealingly toward him. Barrington thought of the girl.

"Fool-like, I stayed too long in the marsh—lost my way." His voice fumbled. "Big bag, Dane—glad to see you, old fellow—got the limit. Bring the ducks from the boat," he turned to the keeper.

"We'll tumble you into your bunk," said Dane, and proceeded to make him fit for the night, poured him brandy from his own bottle, finding Barrington's empty, and brought supper to him.

A suspicion that his friend might have been drinking flitted through Dane's mind, but it went as he sat by the man and noted his heavy sleep of exhaustion.

Barrington woke in the strong sunlight of the morning. The horror of the night had fallen from him as a black garment. The willows rustled peacefully, at regular intervals shaking off belated raindrops which dripped a merry matin on the roof of the old shack. A tule-wren twittered under the window. He rolled from his bunk, and looked out, listening for another sound, while Dane laughed at the man's huge bulk draped in a scanty gray blanket.

The Big Slough ran again in its proper channel, held in leash by the brown, stiff cattails. In the ebb tide the marsh, lonely, large, grim, reasserted itself above the water. Barrington rubbed his eyes. It seemed to him that the distorted, unpleasant visions

of the night had been cleared away by the breath of the morning. He looked at Dane, apprehensive. Dane laughed again.

"Drop the blanket and get on your clothes. Come outside. You've slept twelve hours to the good, and I've," he scowled, dissembling a grumble, "lost my shoot. And the worst of it is, I've got to go back tonight."

"You may have my ducks," said Barrington.

"Thanks, but you'll have to take them yourself."

"I'm not going."

"Not going!"

"No, the shooting's good. It's late in the season, and any day the ducks may go North. The chance is too good to be lost."

Barrington smiled queerly as he said it, as Dane remembered afterward.

The last evening of Barrington's stay Anne Carewe guided him up the rugged trail, which straggled to the summit of the Indian mound. He watched her as she led, his feet stumbling. And, with cheeks glowing red as the lights in her brown hair, she turned and laughed at his awkwardness. Her slender throat was knotted about by a loose silk handkerchief tied sailor-wise, the ends fluttered crimson wings across the breast of her short gown. In her upturned oval face, bronzed by sun and sea-wind, was the freshness, exultation of that sea; the strength, courage and gentleness of great, desolate places purified by silence.

A young moon, thin and bright, swung low in the sky as she told him the simple story of her life, her mother's death, her father's fall of fortune, and how on account of his ill-health and ill-luck they were spending the Winter months at Willow Lodge, where he could have employment, change and quiet, and she could be undisturbed in her studies—she hoped to teach in the Spring.

"We have been wayfarers on misfortune's road," she said, swinging her hat in her brown hands, "but Spring is coming soon!"

"Spring has come," he slowly said, and looked into her shining eyes.

When they turned toward the shack the white crane was preening his feathers on the edge of the marsh, and

the sky was filled again with the mighty rush of the Valkyrie's flying tread; but on earth a brown thrush lifted its song from the willow-clump—and it was well with John Barrington.



A SOJOURNER IN YESTERDAY

By Richard Kirk

DID you love Yesterday so well
That when at length its twilight came,
You made your bed some grassy dell,
Nor answered when you heard your name
Your fellow-travelers called at day,
Departing on their newer way?

You did not choose to hear their call,
But lingered in your chosen spot,
While faint and fainter their footfall
Returned that day—and answered not
But tarried still; and still you stay,
A sojourner in Yesterday.

Was Yesterday so fair to you,
Or did you weary of the quest—
The endless quest we still pursue?
Oh, were you weary—would you rest,
Poor pilgrim, travel-worn and gray
From dusty roads of Yesterday?



DIFFERENT

FRIEND—When you called on the editor, what kind of a man did you find him?
POET—Well, I must admit that he wasn't as polite as his rejection-slips.



HE WAS IT

"EVERYONE in your crowd is so musical that I suppose you sing, too, Dr. Short?"
"No, Miss Sallie. There has to be one to listen."

LES FEUILLES D'OR

Par Louise D'Assche

D'UN voile très léger, mystérieux et triste,
L'automne a revêtu sa tranquille pâleur;
Et des parfums subtils, sous le ciel d'améthyste,
Montent du sol, remplis d'une exquise saveur.

Ce sont toutes les feuilles mortes
Qui s'en vont, planant dans les airs,
Au gré de les souffles amers,
Vent acerbe qui les emporte!

Quelle grâce elles ont encore!...
D'un vol régulier, sans secousses,
Elles tombent, les feuilles d'or,
Les feuilles splendidement rousses...

Sous le dernier baiser du soleil qui s'éteint
Et dore les toits gris de nuances sanglantes,
On se sent envahir par ce trouble incertain:
L'indicible langueur des choses finissantes!



EXASPERATING

MRS. CRAWFORD—I always thought you admired that woman in the flat underneath because she had such a low voice.

MRS. CARBERRY—But I didn't know then that I couldn't hear what she said up the airshaft when she quarreled with her husband.



RIGHT SIZE

MADGE—Charlie says I'm his ideal of a girl.
MARJORIE—No wonder. You just fit that old engagement ring of his.

THE DECORATIVE VIRTUE

By Gelett Burgess

THERE is an old-time ring about the word "gallantry", it has in it an echo of the days of chivalry and romance. One thinks of the ancient costume as well as custom—it goes with the adjective "arch" and with the verb "to bridle"—suggesting one of the lost arts of social amenity. It has a rich, medieval color that has faded out of life in these days of the matter-of-fact and the practical. Gallantry was, no doubt, the chief of those "parts" for which gentlemen were noted in the eighteenth century. We have few "gentlemen of parts" nowadays; men are content to be gentlemen unadorned by such extrinsic graces. For this particular quality marks one of the few paradoxical cases in which the part is not included in the whole. Gallantry is a supplementary charm; it is one of the non-essentials, and it has, in its way, a decorative value which distinguishes it from the plainer virtues. It is the feather upon the cap of gentleness. Only because in the old times gallantry became impossible without the gallant did this fine flower of courtesy with its heavy-sweet perfume run down and become a weed.

The old school of manners has passed with its minuet, its palfrey and its love-locks and ribbons and laces. For these the new mode brings the two-step, the automobile and the khaki. Etiquette has been replaced by "form"—its rules smack more of the stable and the field than of the ball-room. The fundamental rules of good breeding survive, but they are, year by year, more laxly interpreted for the benefit of haste. We pay calls by telephone.

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We content ourselves with following the spirit, rather than the letter of the social law. What was characteristic of the old was its peace, its grace, its harmony. The newer style makes for contest and contrast and force. We have, in short, exchanged beauty for strength.

This change in deportment is exemplified every day in our modern, familiar method of getting acquainted. We do not, at first, exchange compliments, any more than we drop a curtsey or bend the knee. We do not kiss a proffered hand, we do not press our hearts theatrically—nor do we adopt the pleasant fragrant flatteries that went with such polished manners. Instead, we break the ice by means of some pretended jocose quarrel audaciously carried on according to the new formulæ of accepted privilege. Our first meeting is usually carried on along humorous lines instead of upon the stately plane of the old noblesse. We, above all, do not take our partner too seriously; we jest, we laugh at her, we arraign her with joking persiflage, we seek the differences rather than the samenesses between us. It is all good-humored enough, and all perfectly understood—it is quite an established system; it is but politeness seen from another angle. But, in its way, it is quite as false as the old method. For the fictitious praise we have substituted a fictitious dispraise. We seek to put each other at our ease by an assumed attack. It becomes a conversational tourney where the points are removed from our spears and the test of skill is to entertain as much as possible without inflicting a serious

wound. But none the less is it a mock battle. Which is better, then, the unreal conflict or the unreal adoration? Each substitutes excitement for emotion.

Our modern manners are athletic; the old were esthetic. In their social relations our ancestors sought to give an atmosphere of beauty to life. We prefer the polo game and the hurdle race. They cultivated rather the *haute manège* wherein they could display sensational grace and agility in the volt and demi-volt, the caracole, capriole, the curvet and the rest of the "raised airs" of classic horsemanship. This delight in the mere craft and technical excellence inevitably tended to produce an artificiality which went to its absurd extreme in the stilted manners of the French salons and in the exaggerated elegance of Eupheuistic discourse. Gallantry became perfunctory, conventional; and with it the gallant became a mental figure as eccentric as his extraordinary costume. His politeness, his flattery, his witticisms were as unnatural as the titillations from his snuff. Conversation was showily barren—polite dialogue was like a string of imitation gems.

It is not strange, then, that with the reaction a puritanical bluntness seemed to be the only honest mode of speech, and that criticism took the place of compliment. As the cavalier's flowing locks were cut, bowl-shaped, so were the verbal flourishes trimmed down to a sturdier, healthier growth. Time passed—gallantry became a lost art, or an alien one, surviving only in the distrusted urbanity of the Latin races. Women who had before been managed by flattery now shied like timid colts at the first word of praise from a stranger. They met compliment with indignation, and a tribute was an affront.

But we have come back, in our cyclic progress, to a higher and better view of the meaning and function of gallantry, and the word has crept again into our speech. It had long survived only in its martial sense, and, if we regard that interpretation of the term, we may per-

haps discover its essential qualities. "Gallantry under fire." How the phrase stirs one! What is it, and where is its parallel in the petty conflicts of peace?

An Irish corporal, we will say, retreating with his disorganized company, pursued by Zulus, sees his lieutenant fall, shot through the leg. To attempt to rescue him is almost certain death—to fall back to cover and save his ammunition would be perfectly justifiable. Yet he runs forward, picks up the officer and holds the enemy at bay till he has, after a terrible ordeal, brought the wounded man back to shelter and safety. This is gallantry under fire. It is worthy the Victoria Cross. In a single instant he has become famous "for valour."

But what of the soldier who, all day and all night and all day again, lies with his comrades in the rifle-pit, swept by a hail of bullets from an unseen foe, scourged by heat, thirst, hunger and loss of blood? Surely his valor is as great. But it is not gallantry; it is duty well performed. One service is as worthy of praise as the other, but they are different things.

It should be easy to paraphrase this in terms of social relations. We may imagine a fictitious case: Miss Payson, returning with her lover, who has suffered an accident, to his rooms, that she may attend him till the doctor arrives, finds another woman, a stranger, her rival, waiting for him. The situation is compromising. Miss Payson would be justified in thinking the worst of the girl, and of treating her with mere politeness. But the very extremity of the girl's danger, her helplessness, inspires magnanimity, chivalry, some superlative of kindness in Miss Payson's soul. And so she leaps to her rescue, saying: "How glad I am that you were here, for unfortunately I cannot stay. And I do hope that you will call on me soon and let me know how he is!" It is a bit of true gallantry.

Again, suppose another extraordinary chance of displaying the same noble trait. A girl at a restaurant,

publicly abandoned, after a tiff, by her caddish escort, boldly comes over to Miss Payson's table and asks protection. Her act is audacious, unjustified, even reproachable. But again she arouses, by her very desperation, a nobility above conventional dicta. "Do sit down with us," says Miss Payson; "we have been wishing all the evening that we might know you!" See how the abounding good measure of courtesy is pressed down and running over in gallantry! There's a superfluous ounce of blood in some persons that manifests itself in such extremes of sensitive sentiment. You may call this merely *noblesse oblige*, but if it goes no farther or deeper than that, it is spiritual nobility allied to a quickness of mental perception and adaptation that makes the act picturesque. Gallantry of such sort becomes the poetry of which kindness and honor are the prose versions. It is the apotheosis of Christian duty, a quixotic extension of the Golden Rule.

The old gallant sparkled; his gallantry, with its *bon mot* and its deftly turned flattery, shed a luster upon himself only. It was he who was the hero, the chief actor in the encounter. But, in this newer, finer gallantry it is the recipient of the complimentary action who is gilded by the tribute. The gift is altruistic. Such gallantry contains, always, a deference and a humility on the part of the performer that adds to the worth of his deed. He is like the king who washes the feet of the beggars, for, though he loses none of his own nobility in so doing, he dignifies the object of his regard. There was little gallantry to King Cophetua's historic act, for he did but raise the beggar maid up to his own level. One to be gallant must voluntarily stand aside and put the other in the place of honor, and one must do it with grace. The old style gallantry was a test of mental alertness; this rarer form is a test of spiritual delicacy.

Yet, as in the case of the corporal who rescues his lieutenant, this social act must, to be gallant, to distinguish

it from the mere duty of the situation, be attended by something of flourish. It must be dramatic, picturesque, poetic. It must come in a flash, like lightning to cause both surprise, admiration and illumination.

We may define gallantry, then, as an unexpected and unnecessary rise to courtesy in a social emergency—a highly specialized form of politeness. Now, courtesy is latent in us all; no doubt it can, at least, be taught to anyone who has a trace of social talent. But it takes something nobler and more poetic to add the charm and brilliancy which make true gallantry. Mere presence of mind may rescue one with honor from a difficult situation, but to come out of it with gallantry, to turn the tables beautifully upon one's opponent, to cast the coals of fire upon his head with a pyrotechnic art, this requires social genius.

Our illustrations are, of course, extreme forms of gallantry—the quality is exhibited in many other ways and in varying degrees of histrionic value. It ranges from generosity to magnanimity, from unselfishness to renunciation, from the hostess who deliberately mispronounces a word that she may not shame her illiterate guest to that English admiral who destroyed his own surplus of ammunition because his enemy was ill-supplied. Essentially it is a complimentary action; there need be no word of praise spoken.

The practice of gallantry has never died out; its larger, better form has always stimulated those sensitive to such opportunities as it affords. But in its minor aspects it may almost be regarded as having died, to be revived in these latter days. It comes with the renaissance of the esthetic instinct in modern life, with the age of prosperity and leisure. It will become again the social game, a novel form of mental exercise, a petty cult, a freemasonry of the *Illuminati*. One can see it on the increase already, and in its initial aspect it presents a humorous side. We, who have been using the racquet and the cricket-bat, must learn the wand and the grace-hoops! We,

who have only run and jumped, must perforce learn to fly! There will be a merry time coming, when the stock-broker takes up gallantry and practises his art upon the bediamonded dowager!

But there are some to whom it comes naturally enough—the connoisseurs in life, the devotees of mental grace; and, to encounter such a one, if one has not been trained to the art, often proves embarrassing. One suddenly wakes up to the fact that there are unexpected wonders possible in the commonplace. It is like finding jewels in the gutter.

There was a beautiful woman, once, who delighted in beauty in others and who often complained of the conventionalities which prevented her from giving her tribute to her fair sisters. One day she broke down this artificial barrier, and, upon the street, she stopped a young girl whose face she admired. "I want to tell you that you're the prettiest girl I have seen today," said the gallant one. To this gratuity the disconcerted maid could only, at first, stammer, "Why, the ideal!" It was pathetic. She had no response at hand for so surprising and unexpected a compliment. But that she was pleased was evident by the way she rallied to meet the emergency. She knew that she had been inadequate to the situation, that something was expected of her; and, inarticulate as she was, she did her best to prove worthy, groping blindly for the retort courteous. Finally she brought out, in a burst of gratitude, "Well, if you think *I'm* pretty, I can only say ditto!" The remark, equivocal as it was, was understood. She, too, had proved herself capable of gallantry. Perhaps never in her life before had she risen so high in the amenities.

Many women, however, are so unaccustomed to considering compliments as possibly sincere that they meet them with an assumption of anger. "If you say things like that, I'll not talk to you!" is a common way of accepting praise. She might at least say, "You can hardly induce me to believe that," if she cannot return

the favor on the fly and have the grace to answer, "I'm delighted to know that you think so!"

For gallantry should challenge gallantry—no lesser mode of feeling can compete with it. It should put one on one's mettle and bring out the best one has of sympathy and appreciation. It should lubricate our human relations. How jarring most personal intercourse seems, after one has come into contact with those who practise this delicate refinement, this pretty religion of ultra-courtesy! But one must be educated to this point of view—we are too used to the realism of the times. "Kiss me good-bye!" said a wife, as her husband left her, one morning, to go to his business. "Why, I've kissed you once already!" he replied, and never noticed the bitter humor of his remark. He was not unkind, he was not lacking in affection, but in gallantry.

It is women who excel at this fine art. The gallantry of woman to woman is as characteristic of the sex as is her jealousy. It is not so applicable to literary exploitation, for it has never crystallized into the formula of a newspaper joke. Satire is always easier than appreciation, and so, while we have written much of woman's weakness and inconsistency, woman's gallantry has been left to the larger minded novelists to describe. But this dramatic quality is one of the finest fruits of her restoration to mental equality. It has come with her first awakening to "class consciousness" and, in fine women, is already the sign of a perfected alliance offensive and defensive. The true type of modern woman is, in a finer sense than the political one, the champion of her sex. The unprotected damsel in distress often finds succor first not from the errant knight, but from her chivalrous sister. The type of the woman of the day who assumes man's freedom and opportunity is not *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, but *Jeanne d'Arc*.

If you have ever seen your hostess select the least promising, the predestined wall-flower from her guests,

bring her out into the centre of the stage, throw the pink calcium upon her, show off her good points and keep her worst in the shadow with the cleverness of a professional photographer, make her the heroine of the company, and all with an exquisite sacrifice of her own importance, you have witnessed gallantry of a sort far more common among women than among men. Perhaps women are more facile because they have a talent for self-sacrifice.


From man to man such tributes are well-nigh impossible. Men show their mutual esteem mainly by jocular abuse. They fear sentiment, being unable to differentiate it from sentimentality. Nothing is so mortifying to them as to be discovered guilty of feeling. A man can rise to heights of nobility and magnanimity; he can, like the knights of romance, throw away his shield if his opponent is unguarded, he can in his way be chivalrous, but gallantry from man to man is rare. The defeated suitor, for instance, seldom rises to the heights of courtesy toward his rival that is often attained by women defeated in love.

There was one, for instance, who, after having been jilted, presented to the second woman, the new love, a tintype of her lover taken as a babe—her dearest possession. Unnecessary, unexpected, dramatic, the act was one of pure gallantry. The conquered general may haul down his flag and present his sword to his enemy with grace, but he cannot salute the victorious banner. So men in their social relations live up to their code of honor—women rise above all law.

In the relations between men and women gallantry is most picturesque, and it achieves its climax in courtship. Here it is inherent and essential; it is courtship. But in such a battle of flowers no man can rival a gallant woman, for this is *par excellence* the

woman's field. Man's ineptitude in wooing is woman's immemorial complaint of him. All his banter, his railery, his whimsical pleasantry cannot equal a single act of gallantry. The young girl admires chivalry in men and prefers it, on the whole, to strength or wisdom. It is not merely a selfish longing, for it is the worship of an abstract principle, it is the attitude of gallantry in itself she worships; and she delights in the tribute whether it is paid to herself or another. In a word, she craves the poetry of life. For women, artists in social affairs, never lose their sight of the ideal, however impossible it may be to find it realized. Their interest lies in the potential, not the dynamic power of the moment. The present, for them, always holds romance, for it holds the possibility of emotional adventure. And of this gallantry is the outward and visible sign.

It is, perhaps, because we have become used to regarding the beautiful as a luxury rather than as a necessity that gallantry, nowadays, excites surprise. The ancient costumes, weapons, tools and architecture all were beautiful, and one was familiar with the esthetic atmosphere. We think now only of objects of art as beautiful, and, in the same way, in the give and take of our everyday life, we do not expect to minister to any higher sense than that of honesty. We trust the plain, uncolored version of the drama of the commonplace and the decorative virtues are regarded suspiciously. It is a pity, for it is surely as interesting to meet the stranger with the doffed cap as with the clasped fist. One has only to try it—to enter, even if experimentally, into this charming relation with the first new-comer to discover a vivid experience well worth tasting. The game of kindness can be made as thrilling as the game of mutual depreciation, and, when you play it aright, coöperation is as exciting as competition.



L'ÉPI

Par Émile Solari

AU milieu de son régiment, Nathan Martin, simple soldat, marchait depuis le lever du soleil. Et on avait tant piétiné dans tous les sens, par les routes, les venelles et les champs qui lui-même, qui était du pays, ne s'y reconnaissait plus. Le nez bas, les yeux masqués par la visière du képi, en marchant péniblement, alourdi, abruti par les mauvaises journées et les mauvaises nuits, il ne voyait devant lui, entre ses deux cartouchières et le va-et-vient de ses gros souliers, qu'un bout du sol, cailloux, terre ou végétation qui, interminablement, s'échappait.

Aussi resta-t-il surpris, quand, ayant levé la tête, sur l'ordre bref d'une halte, il reconnut sa maison et son champ. Sa maison solide et trapue, couverte de son toit de tuiles comme d'un chapeau renfrogné, abritée par ses portes et ses volets épais, clos. Sa cour, ses remises et ses hangars, dégarnis des instruments et des accessoires, cachés; désertés par les poules et les porcs, par le cheval, vendus, dès le début de la guerre. La servante aussi s'en était allée, les blés étaient coupés. Il n'y avait plus, sur la terre séchée, que le hérissément des chaumes. Et tout cela était enveloppé de silence.

Qu'allait-on faire là? Était-ce enfin la bataille? — Ou le repos? Le régiment s'était allongé, à droite et à gauche, en petits paquets qui jalonnaient le terrain.

La voix du capitaine commanda:
— Couchés!

Avec ses camarades, Nathan se laissa choir sur le côté en faisant porter à terre le poids oppresseur du sac. Et ce fut dans son champ, juste au bout, à

l'endroit où la terre dominait un peu le chemin et où l'immobilité d'une pierre marquait la limite.

Ainsi, couché, les regards glissés entre les brins, il vit le commencement de la bataille. D'abord, à grand trot, arriva l'artillerie dont les fantassins étaient le soutien. Les pièces furent mises en batterie, pointées. Et on attendit un ordre, dans l'anxiété.

Elle était quadruple pour Nathan. Par la tourmente, il pouvait perdre quatre trésors. D'abord sa vie. Il était jeune et solide, avec des cheveux drus, l'œil clair, le torse large et les jambes en piliers, fait pour accomplir cent années.

Ensuite, sa maison. Qu'un obus la touchât et c'était l'éparpillement de ses souvenirs et de sa richesse avec l'or des économies enfouies. Ces deux choses étaient exposées aux coups de l'ennemi.

Mais au loin, droit devant lui, derrière les poteaux bariolés de la frontière, sur le sol étranger, près du clocher de Noblecourt qu'il voyait, il y avait la maison de sa fiancée. Troisième tourment. Cette dot, aux tonnerres des canons amis, allait-elle s'envoler en fumées, en cendres, en poussières? Et, évoquée avant l'idée des biens matériels, la quatrième angoisse vivait devant laquelle toutes les autres étaient nulles:

Catherine, sa fiancée. La belle fille, au rire épanoui, à la chair élastique et blonde, aux cheveux d'or, aux yeux couleur bleuet, aux bras courageux, la fiancée, qu'allait-elle devenir dans le déchaînement de cet enfer?

La défaite et la victoire étaient, pour Nathan, un égal péril. L'une ou l'autre

tre pouvait les séparer, lui et sa fiancée, à jamais, par la mort.

À sa droite, la première pièce tonna. Puis la seconde. Et chacune fit rebondir son fracas. Aux premiers coups, le clocher de Noblecourt fut décroché. Nathan, anxieux, se leva sur les coudes, pour voir. Au pied de l'église, il aperçut encore la maison de Catherine intacte. Mais les canons ennemis ripostaient. Dans une déchirure du tintamarre, le capitaine cria :

— À plat ventre, bon Dieu !

Nathan s'allongea. Des sifflements passaient. Le bombardement dura une heure. On ne savait plus si le silence existait sur terre. Les batteries, successivement, se taisaient, changeaient de place, recommençaient. En passant derrière les fantassins tapis, un général dit :

— Noblecourt brûlé.

Malgré l'ouragan, Nathan se leva sur les deux mains. C'était vrai. Au-dessus du village étranger montait une chevelure de lueurs et de fumées. Et la maison de Catherine ne se voyait plus, rasée sans doute à demi par une fauchée d'obus. Hypnotisé, les yeux secs, plein d'horreur, Nathan regardait, se haussant davantage. Brusquement, à côté de lui, la rage des canons se tut. Au loin, les pièces ennemies grondaient encore. Un camarade le tira par la manche.

— Gare !...

Ce fut le seul mot. Au-dessus d'eux, un obus éclatait en gerbe, si proche qu'ils n'en virent que la lumière blanche et verte. Le bruit, trop violent, ne fut pas perçu par leurs oreilles, les ébranla seulement des pieds à la tête, les claqua sur le sol. Dans les cabrements des chevaux, les pièces démarraient, repartaient, pour avancer. Elles galopèrent. Derrière Nathan, le capitaine cria :

— Debout ! En avant ! À cent mètres ! Pas de course !

Les hommes se levèrent. Nathan essaya d'en faire autant, mais il retomba, comprit. Une douleur envahissait son dos :

— Blessé !

Il essaya de se mouvoir, tandis qu'en

avant, le vacarme recommençait. Sa main, glissé sous lui, revint rouge.

— Du sang...

Il sentait une tiédeur, une coulée douce. Sa force s'en allait et il ferma les yeux.

Quand il les rouvrit, le soleil était au midi. Un silence énorme pesait sur la campagne. D'abord, il crut s'éveiller dans son lit. Puis les souvenirs lui revinrent. Et, comme, sans forces, il ne pouvait bouger, il resta là, les yeux ouverts, à reconstruire ses angoisses. La vie de Catherine, la sienne... Elles étaient le jouet de la guerre, l'acier luisant de son fusil près de son visage l'en faisait souvenir quand il abaissait les cils. Des heures passèrent. Nathan ne souffrait pas, anéanti par une immense faiblesse.

Soudain, des voix, près de là, naquirent. Elles échangeaient des mots indistincts. Puis :

— C'est un blessé...

— C'est un mort...

— Voyons !

Deux hommes se penchèrent sur l'agonie de Nathan. Ils avaient des bras sards à croix rouge. Un d'eux portait des galons au képi. Celui-ci examina, palpa.

— Une déchirure. Une hémorragie... Il faut pincer, recoudre. Ensuite, long repos, un lit...

Il fit un geste qui voulait dire :

— L'hôpital est loin. Il sera mort avant d'arriver.

Mais Nathan murmura :

— La maison, là au bout du champ. Elle est à moi. La clef est à droite de la porte, sous une pierre.

On ouvrit, on le transporta. Quand il fut sur le lit, il s'évanouit de nouveau, après avoir dit :

— Catherine ?

L'infirmier qui l'avait relevé remarqua que le sol portait à peine trace de rouge. L'énorme quantité de sang répandu avait été bué par une fissure, dans cette terre sèche de juillet.

Il fallut, à Nathan, quatre mois pour refaire le sang perdu. Pendant ce temps, la guerre fut achevée par une victoire décisive. L'espoir reparut.

Peu à peu, les jardins, les terres, les fermes virent revenir les habitants inquiets qui palpaient avec sollicitude les choses sauvées de la tourmente. Rasurés, tous se remirent à l'œuvre.

Mais si Nathan réparait sa chair, il ne trouvait pas le moyen de reconstruire son bonheur. Catherine, épargnée par le désastre, était venue tout de suite à son chevet pour veiller sa résurrection. Seulement, elle restait farouche et fermée, maintenant qu'il reprenait ses forces. Au cœur, elle avait gardé l'épouvante de la tempête; dans la mémoire, la vision de la maison paternelle s'écroulant sous l'obus, et de sa petite sœur, une enfant, éventrée par un éclat. Le sol où elle consentait à mettre les pieds pour venir soigner Nathan et Nathan lui-même, c'était, pour elle, un peu de ce pays qui avait déchaîné la guerre contre le sien, qui l'avait foudroyé et ruiné. Bien que, séparés par si peu d'espace, ils fussent, en somme, du même sang, elle le regardait maintenant avec l'instinct de sa peur non éteinte, comme un étranger hostile.

Et, dès qu'il put se soutenir, elle s'en alla, sans vouloir promettre un retour.

Nathan languit. La puissance revenait dans ses muscles. Mais il n'avait pas le courage de se remettre au travail. Sa maison et son champ, qui n'étaient plus voués à Catherine, lui déplaisaient.

Cependant, en novembre, tandis qu'autour de lui les labours se faisaient, il eut un réveil, racheta des animaux, ramena sa ferme et se mit derrière la char-rue.

Comme Nathan menait le bout de son dernier sillon auprès du coin où il était resté, blessé, près de la borne, il remarqua que le soc retournait une motte plus noire. Il se pencha et crut reconnaître les traces de son sang.

Ce fut là que poussèrent les tiges les plus belles. Après le repos sous la neige, après la germination lente, pendant les mois chauds, elles montèrent et il y eut, dans ce coin, une touffe de blé plus haute que les autres.

Catherine restait toujours aussi froide.

Elle passait, parfois, comme par hasard sur le chemin, mais elle s'arrêtait à peine, disait non.

Un matin, les blés étant mûrs, le soleil se leva parmi des dentelles de brumes. Puis il les dispersa, s'éleva, glorieux, dans le ciel pur. Nathan Martin, levé tôt, regardait ses récoltes, en calculant l'effort à faire pour la recueillir, quand il vit venir Catherine. Elle allait vers la ville, un panier au bras, accorte, belle, le pas souple mais le visage toujours sévère.

Nathan l'arrêta. Encore une fois elle dit non. Mais il ne la quitta pas, lui fit faire le tour de la ferme, lui montra le domaine restauré qui attendait son règne. Peu à peu, elle semblait s'amollir. Au tournant des chemins, au pas des portes, Nathan la pressait pour avoir un baiser. Mais elle refusait sa bouche et disait non, toujours.

Enfin ils arrivèrent au champ de blé. Vraiment il était superbe, en plein soleil, avec ses tiges rousses. Jamais la moisson n'avait tenu de telles promesses. Catherine, en son âme paysanne, en fut émue. Nathan dit :

— Tout ça, à toi, si tu voulais...

Puis il la mena vers l'angle où se balançaient les plus hautes tiges. Catherine se pencha. Des coquelicots vermillons voisinaient avec des bluets, bleus comme ses yeux. Nathan prit un épi, l'ouvrit entre ses doigts, montra le grain lourd.

— Goûte!

D'un geste vif, il le lui glissa entre les lèvres. Puis, lui ployant la taille, il l'embrassa. Catherine eut en même temps le goût du baiser et du blé mûr. Ce blé qui était le blé de Nathan, éclos par sa peine et par son sang.

Cette communion la remua. Le désir, indistinct, fit naître en elle l'amour plus fort que tout et quand elle eut repris son souffle, ses yeux alanguis, ses seins frémissants, tout son être vaincu dit :

— Oui!



THE BIRTH OF A PHOENIX

By Anne Warner

IT was in the office of a large hotel. There was the usual three-sided desk with the usual two clerks behind it. One of them had opened the register. He looked at it and then turned it so that it would come the right way for the lady to sign her name. She took the pen in her hand, looked down at the page and suddenly a very curious, strange, pale look came over her face.

"Oh, I don't believe I want to register here," she said quickly. "Can't I sign on one of those little white cards, as you used to let me?"

"Yes, certainly," said the clerk quietly.

He pulled out a drawer beyond the desk, took a small card from it and laid it on the leaf of the open register. She wrote her name upon the card—wrote it quite crookedly. Her eyes seemed to be looking at something upon the page of the book rather than on the card on which she was writing.

"Are there any letters?" she asked, as she laid down the pen.

The clerk turned to the large range of pigeon-holes behind him and counted out thirteen or fourteen letters. She did not take them from him. Her eyes went just a little backward, and a maid, standing there, answered the look, came forward, took up the letters, and then followed her mistress out toward the elevator. There was a boy at the elevator with three valises. He gave the elevator-boy a number. The two women entered the elevator. The door closed and the boy turned away with the valises.

Upstairs, in the rooms of that apart-

ment set apart for her, were flowers and a piano and everything that could make strange rooms look as homelike as possible. She came in among it all and hardly seemed to see anything. She went over by the window and sat down upon a chair and rested her face upon her hand. The maid put the letters on the table and came across the room and unpinned her mistress's hat. The valises had arrived by that time, and she took them into an inside room and began very quickly to unpack them.

In the unpacking she passed back and forth between the rooms continually, but her mistress still sat there with her face resting on her hand, and did not move. Trunks came a little later and the maid began to unpack them also. Still the one sat with her face on her hand and did not move. It was almost an hour after she had taken that position before she altered it and then, at last, with a heavy, heavy sigh, she got up and came in to where the bed and belongings were all spread out together.

"Louise," she said to the maid, "have you taken my writing things out?"

"Yes, madame," she said; "they are there on the desk."

She went over by the desk and sat down and rested her head on her hand again and, after another long while of thinking, she took up the sheet of paper and the pen and began to write.

I want to see you. For five years I have never wanted to see you. Today chance has thrown us together under the same roof. I have just seen your name downstairs on

the register. I want you to come some time this afternoon. Any time, but, remember, if you do not come, it will be *all right*. Remember that everything is *very right* for me now.

She signed her full name.

"Louise, I wish you would ring the bell," she said, "and I wish you would give this letter," she added, sealing and directing it as she spoke, "to whoever answers and ask him to deliver it as soon as possible. Give him a fee when you ask him. I don't wish any mistake to be made about this letter."

The maid unfastened the leather purse that hung at her belt, took out some money, took the letter and passed into the other room. Then the woman dropped her face in her hands again and sat still once more.

It was about five o'clock that afternoon when, not a card, but a sealed note came to the room. She opened it and read:

You know the sort of life I lead. I did not wake up until a quarter of four. I did not notice the note among my mail until three-quarters of an hour afterward. I have read it now. Shall I come to your parlor or shall I take you out somewhere? Of course I will do whatever you ask.

She sat quiet a little while and looked at the note. The boy who had brought it stood with his little tray in his hands, and looked at her.

At last she said, "Ask him if he will come up here."

She stood up and crossed her hands upon her heart, as one who prays, and went over by the window and looked at the subway, which was blasting its way along the same as ever.

"I thought I had grown to be very strong," she said, "but, now, I find I am so weak."

There were some flowers in a vase over by the window, and some of the rose-leaves were dropping on the window-seat. She took them up in her fingers and looked at them.

"People say," she said, "that everything will be all the same a hundred years from now. But it won't be.

He won't be here and I won't be here, either, then."

There came a tap at the door and immediately it was opened from without. A man was standing there, and he looked tired, worn and most deathly pale. He looked doubtful, and hopeful, and glad, and miserable, all at once.

"Come in," she said; and he came in.

"Do sit down," she said; and he crossed over by the window and sat down.

They gave each other just one quick look, and then she sat down, too, and clasped her hands tightly in her lap.

"This is good of you," she told him.

"Yes," he said, somewhat vaguely, "but of course you knew that, if you wrote to me, I would come any time." He corrected his speech somewhat, "Anyone would come," he said.

"Oh, as to that," she replied, "of course when a lady asks for anything, a gentleman generally does it, but I can remember asking, begging, and even praying, on my knees, to you, and not getting anything in return."

"That was long ago," he murmured, somewhat indistinctly.

"Have I not changed a great deal?" she said, not looking at him.

He looked straight at her.

"Yes, you have changed a great deal. I think you much better looking than you were."

"Oh, yes," she laughed, "everybody says that. They call me very pretty. Didn't you wonder why I sent for you?" she added.

"Well," he confessed, "I never was so surprised in all my life. You know you told me that you would never speak to me again after that time."

"But I have spoken to you," she said.

"Oh, yes, when it was forced upon you."

"I have always been polite when I had to."

"I don't know about that. I can remember a time when I came up to you and you turned your back toward me."

"When?"

"Oh, well, no matter. What's the good of going into it all?"

She raised her eyes now and looked into his face.

"Don't you wonder why I sent for you?" she repeated. "I asked you that before, you know."

"And I said before, I was so surprised," he replied.

"I had to wait a long, long time," she told him thoughtfully. "I promised myself that, if the day ever came that out of my heart I could thank you for what you did, I would see you and thank you. When I saw your name on the register this morning I felt that the day had come, and I sent for you, and you came, too. I want to thank you very sincerely."

"Thank me for what?—in God's name."

"For what you did and said in that long ago. All that I am I owe to the way you treated me. It almost killed me. It almost drove me mad, but I didn't quite go mad and I didn't die. I went to work and the way I worked and the way I have won is all owing to you. If you hadn't spurned me so cruelly I should not have had the strength to prove how unworthy I was of such cruel treatment."

"I never spurned you," he cried indignantly.

"I don't know any better word for it. You didn't want me, and I loved you and wanted you——"

"But—" he began.

"Oh, let me finish," she interposed calmly. "I want to tell you everything today. We may not meet again for five years more. Let it be plain now. I have not wanted to speak to you for five years. I may never want to speak to you again. You had better take this one chance when I feel grateful and enjoy it."

"Enjoy it!" he said bitterly.

She did not notice the bitterness in his tone. She looked straight ahead and spoke very quietly.

"I think it was natural that I wanted to be happy," she said. "Every woman wants to be happy. There

never was in my whole life anybody but you from the very first minute that I laid eyes on you to the very last minute"—she caught her breath very quickly—"the last minute five years ago. I loved you," she added—almost wailed.

"Oh, no, you didn't love me," he said. "You only thought you did."

"It comes to the same thing, whether I thought I loved you or whether I loved you. I had to learn that either way you didn't love me. You didn't want me. You said so. But now I can say to you that I have lived to see that it was all for the best."

"I couldn't do anything else," he cried, with a wild sort of rebellion.

She did not speak.

"There wasn't anything else to do," he went on. "I didn't wish to be unnecessarily cruel, but you made it so hard. You wouldn't give up."

"I couldn't give up. There's no give-up in me. All the perseverance and energy that I have put into my work is the same perseverance and energy that once I gave to clinging to the idea that I should some day have your love. It was because you threw that all back upon me and because it had to find some other vent—it was because of that that I could go out in the world and find success. A man would have conquered a kingdom with the strength of that which you rejected. It wasn't my fault that I troubled by persisting and being hopeful. It was my nature. You forced me at last to give you up because you wouldn't have me. Then I turned to something that depended upon myself alone, and I won out."

"Let me talk now," he interrupted impatiently.

"I haven't finished," she replied. "I want to say again that I have not sent for you to complain, but to show you that, instead of causing my ruin, you have caused my joy. My pride wouldn't let me stay there where you left me, dragging my ball and chain about. The pride which I humbled, when I begged you on my knees to have mercy on me—that pride could not bear,

after all was hopeless—irrevocably over forever—to have you able, when you returned from time to time, to see me always there striving, manacled, against the fate you had doomed me to. For a long time I was very unhappy. For a long time my misery knew hardly any bounds; but it is all over now. If I never saw you again, I should not care, but I am glad to have seen you once more and told you that I thank you, for even the misery, from the very depth of my heart."

"Don't you know," he said hastily, "that it would never have done? We wouldn't have been just merely thrown over or pitched into the ditch. We would have been cast out——"

"But that would have been good," she said, her tone ringing strongly. "It would not have helped you any, I know, but that ditch would have been paradise to me."

"Not after people marry," he declared brutally.

There was a slight pause. She opened her lips to speak, then closed them again.

"It is all right for a little while," he went on, "but it doesn't last. It wouldn't have lasted. We see that around us every day."

"Oh, yes, and I see it now," she said. "I am glad now that it is all as it is. That is what I am saying to you. It was only then that I didn't see it. I wasn't old enough to understand. I didn't know enough of the world. I only knew that where you were and I was, we were happier than any other two people that I have ever seen together. I only knew that the same things, and the same ideas, were a joy to us both, and, too, that there was nothing—*nothing* that you could ever ask of me, however against my will it was, that I didn't love to do it, because I loved you so. But you would not have cared for that. I think after a little while it would have been wearisome to you."

"How so?"

"To have had anyone always around that way would have annoyed you.

You would have been cruel to me, I know—after a while."

At that he started violently up out of his seat and went to the window and threw up the sash. A flood of the steel-cold air came over them both.

"Cruel to you?" he said with his back to her. "I, cruel to you? Was I ever cruel to you except when to save us both I told you the truth and went away?"

"Yes," she said, "you were cruel to me. When you went away and did not stay away—when you came back."

"It was not superhuman," he said hoarsely, still looking out of the window.

A little curious flash was in her eyes.

"But it undid all you had said," she told him, "to come back like that. You told me that you did not care for me, and you went away, and then three days later you came back."

"Well, I didn't say that I cared for you when I came back, did I?"

"No, you never said that you cared for me. All your declarations were always that you didn't care. I do believe that you explained to me more than ten times how you did not love me. It seems so strange, under the circumstances, that you should take so much pains to have me understand that. Ordinarily, when men don't care for women, they only need to tell them once."

He laughed, still looking out of the window.

"Yes, most women need to be told once."

He turned around then and faced her.

"Shall I tell you again now that I don't care for you?" he asked.

"No," she said, "it isn't necessary now. You see, if you did tell me that you cared for me now, I wouldn't marry you. I have my own life now, and I can be happy without you. Besides, I have learned to believe you. I never was able to believe you when you declared you didn't care, but in these five years I have learned to believe you and hope that it is so. I don't think that I could love any man now.

In the first place, love—real love—does not come twice and, if it could come twice, I would shrink from it—I would go far out of my course to avoid it—it costs a woman too much. A man is not worth what a woman has to suffer for him."

"And women," he said sardonically, "are they worth what men suffer for them?"

He slammed down the sash as he spoke and came toward her. She rose up out of her seat and held out her hand. He took it.

"Some women are worth what men may suffer for them," she said, her hand lying in his. "No man has ever suffered for me, but I have suffered myself, enough to know that I would have been worth it. You must go now. I haven't any more time to spare. It has been very nice to see you. You bring back some of my old self to me. And it is nice to feel that I have in me some of the old self, some of the self that was worth love. It's gone now. In spite of all my success I'm not truly what I used to be. I am not unselfish now, as I used to be. I wouldn't face now, for anybody, what I would once have faced for you."

He held her hand tightly in his.

"But it will be all right," he said rather vaguely, "and heaven knows that no one in the wide world will be gladder than I. It was not all fun—even to me, that breaking off. You know there were pleasanter ways than I could have spent those days and nights."

"Yes, I suppose so. It was trying for you, while it was tragic for me. Now you must go. Good-bye."

"Oh, stop a minute," he said. "How long are you going to be in town?"

"Until tomorrow night."

"Won't I see you again?"

"I don't think so."

"And won't I hear from you ever?"

"No, I don't think that either."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

The next morning she was lying in bed, not resting, but trying to rest. There were the stains of tears upon her cheeks.

"I don't know," she thought, "whether I am glad or sorry that I saw him again. I thought I was so strong, but I was so weak."

The maid was there at the bedside with her breakfast on a tray.

"I don't want anything to eat," she said. "Take it away again," and turning her face into the pillow she murmured, "It's quite the old tale. I cannot eat and I cannot sleep. It would have been much better if I hadn't seen him."

Someone rang sharply at the outside door. The maid went through to answer it.

"Oh, madame," she said, returning, "it is a letter and I am to wake you and give it to you even if you were asleep, so it must be very important."

She sat up in bed and took the letter. It ran thus:

I have been walking my floor like a tiger this whole night. I think I have been a fool or something worse. I think I have always cared, and was a coward, and did not know it. Which shall I do? Shall I leave by the next train, or . . . ?

"Bring me a pencil, Louise," she said to the maid, "and bring me a portfolio, or something that I can write on."

Her hand shook terribly. She tried to write, and then she couldn't. She turned his letter over so that the blank side came uppermost.

"I don't know why I can't trust you, Louise," she said. "You will soon know. Take the pencil and write on there:

"I always knew that you always cared. It was the heaviest and most unbearable part of it all. If I were you it doesn't seem to me that I would leave town. It seems—to me that . . .

"Leave it so, Louise," she said.

"Put it in an envelope and send it so."

The maid obeyed.



THE JEWEL OF EXPERIENCE

By Mary Moss

THE June evening was heavy with warmth and perfume. Great drifts of honeysuckle overhung the balustrade, drenching the air with poignant sweetness. From a terraced garden below came the breath of roses, languorous, yet strangely stirring to awakened senses. The fragrance of magnolia wafted up to where they stood, he and she.

She had been one who trifled with happiness; now it had overtaken her. Often before she would dally on the brink of her own sensations, only to withdraw, now she floated helpless with the current. His arm lay about her and she leaned against him. It was a moonless night of azure skies and stars. The heavens seemed high and vaulted. At the foot of a sloping lawn, by the border of a somber grove, myriads of fireflies lightened and vanished like an orchestra of bluish sparks, rhythmically following a mysterious common impulse.

"I have been thinking . . ." she began.

"But why think?" and he kissed her. "Isn't this all we want?"

Still she would speak—only the old story of a woman affrighted at too much happiness; perhaps this would be all—perhaps in this long month of Spring passing into Summer they had drained it to the dregs. Could either give the other more than had already been bestowed? This perfect time of efflorescence, would it prove a beginning or—the end?

He was simple, and he loved her. His imagination played no pranks. He had found her courted, but ill con-

tent with life, a restless questioner, hunting for causes, ever probing her own heart and finding nothingness. She was delicate of mind and body; mystery and love beckoned out of her velvet eyes, but the smiling lips curved in mockery. She was accessible, curious of emotion. Many had sought and all but won her. Then the elusive spirit within drew back, weighed the seeker, tested, cast aside.

With him it had been different; others strove to convince her, but she was cleverer than most. He only claimed his mate and took her.

"Four winged weeks!" she whispered, and shivered in his arms.

In the open country far away a cube of moving light marked a line of hills and valleys, interrupted here and there by intervening trees. The light appeared again, gliding onward, abruptly vanishing.

"The trolley!" Her thoughts followed the distant cars. These led back into the world, out of paradise, here in this their home.

Plucking a spray of honeysuckle he fastened it at the throat of her dress; then, bending close, he inhaled its perfume. Once more she shivered, because his nearness thrilled her. But would it be always so? Were they not squandering treasure, spending their gold in handfuls, keeping nothing by them?

"It's unlucky to be too happy," she said.

"Are you lonely?" he asked. "Do you want people?"

And then knowledge came to her—what they must do to be safe—always

to feel sure one of the other. "And of ourselves, too, Eric," she murmured.

At first he caught her meaning, but only dimly. "You want to go away, even from me, Nell?"

"Don't you see?" she pleaded. "It's because we've been drifting here through enchantment, that I can't bear it ever to come about that what we now feel should some day end in dull yoke-fellowship. We must never settle down tamely, without certainty that we really need each other. We want to feel the pang of absence." She tried to make him see her haunting fear. "Lest I love you only with my heart, Eric."

"Isn't your heart enough for me, Nell dear?" he answered. "And this—and——"

Only because she felt it so she shrank from him. But how to make plain in words her need to analyze, to distinguish this from a fastidious wish for companionship? How tell him her craving to discover if true companionship were hers, or whether indeed their only bond. . . . Trembling and blushing in the darkness she tried to make him see—and failed.

How could he understand? This woman was his wife! And they who once had been two particles floating separate through space had now become a sacred unit. Once he liked other women well and let them see it. Now there were no others in all the world, just one supple dark-eyed girl, his wife, mother of his children that were to be.

"It's all nonsense; I don't like it," he objected. "Suppose something were to happen, illness or accident!"

But before bewilderment could harden into resistance she had swayed him, hurried him into half-consent, using conscious witcheries, lavishing her sweetness. Still he did not understand.

"And after that, when this month of yours is past, we come together once for all, Nell. No more questionings—that's my condition." There came a touch of sternness in his voice.

At daybreak she had gone.

July had never been so golden. Newly mown wheat lay rich upon the uplands. Reapers drove their wise teams in long, straight lines, gathering the grain. In a cleft between two curving hillsides a spring welled forth from the roots of a branching willow. Birds drank fearlessly, splashed in the edges of a pool, then, perched on bending shoots of blackberry, they dried their ruffled feathers and sprang aloft with a short midday song.

She sat on a log near the spring. Through a vista broken in trees by Winter storms she could catch a glimpse of the highroad below—as a steep descent, a stretch of level ground. Would he come that way, or over the hills from among bands of reapers? Oh, the well-laid plan! A month apart, then meeting here at the old willow—but only meeting—and this each had promised—if the need were keen, if absence never once spelled freedom. Ah! she had found what he meant to her, found so clearly that she had long ceased to ask why she wanted him—his strength, his beauty, the steadfastness which stayed her wayward fancy.

The hour had almost come; she glanced at her little watch glowing with emeralds and diamonds, glinting in the good sunbeams. All at once she grew shy. The beating of her heart oppressed her. That thicket of spice-wood and tangled creepers! There she could hide. But it would be unkind, perhaps, to tease. In that short moment he might doubt her presence, but for the last time. Never again would she trifle with happiness. He had been right, it was a golden month out of their lives, a heavy price to pay for being sure. Impatience moved within her, she was tense with longing.

Two squirrels darted past her and began a jerky progress along the crest of a rude stone wall. She had a whimsical notion that the pair might be house-hunting. One led the way, protecting. The other followed, now waiting, now reassured and frisking at its leader's side.

"Wiser than I," Nell mused in her

hiding-place. "That squirrel takes its mate's good offices without experiment." Suddenly the pair saw her, and with a flicker of bushy tails they vanished in a cranny of the wall.

She studied her watch. Their hour had come. On the road below, where the descent was steepest, she heard puffs from a laboring engine. Through broken branches she could see a motor-car, showy with red and brass, a liveried chauffeur and—yes, it was he! What a strange way to come, but speedy. He might have traveled from afar; she wished the hill were not so steep. His step had not yet sounded through snapping twigs along the narrow path when Nell left her hiding-place and again sat on the log, striving to avert her eyes, but ever bound to face the way by which he needs must come. At last he touched her shoulder. For a second she could only rest her cheek against his hand, silent, far beyond words or action.

"For two eternal instants, Eric, I was faint," Nell murmured. "Faint with dread that you might not come."

"Not come!" Eric had never even dreamed of failing. "But how could that be?"

She pressed the closer to him. "Did you never think, dear, did you never wonder through all this month, if I should be waiting here?"

Again he pondered. "Why, no, Nell. Aren't we—?" he broke off in bewilderment. "What are you talking of? How could we stay apart?"

"Of course not, not one hour longer." She nestled against him. Ah, it was good to be with him, good to find something steadfast. But in her heart she must confess, he surely could have been reckoned with. It was herself that Nell had doubted. Now that haunting fear had been forever laid to rest. His constancy had bred constancy even in her.

But he was speaking. "See, Nell! I did a foolish thing, because you wished it, though every day I've less and less seen why—"

"Never mind understanding," she broke in, "since we are here together.

Let us not even speak, but only stay till the sun fades out of this unflawed heaven. Then we will go back to our own tranquil house and wait on the terrace, side by side, watching the little distant lights move restlessly along the hilltops. It promises to be a moonless night of azure skies and stars; the same—and we together just the same—as when we parted."

"Not quite the same," said Eric, answering as a man who gropes through twilight wanderings for an obscure but well-remembered path.

"Not quite?" she brushed aside a doubt. "Surely you're right. Honey-suckle has gone by, fireflies grow dimmer now. That was June. But we've come to a new fragrance on the air, the potent sweetness of tasseled chestnut trees, with promise of blooming corn."

"That is it." Was there a new note in Eric's quiet voice? "We can't go back. It's something different now, and until I understand, how can we be together?"

This time Nell looked at him in vague alarm; then, rising, she moved and leaned against the willow's trunk, poised and balanced. The last quivering leaf shadow marked changing patterns on the rim of her garden-hat. Then, as the sun dipped nearer earth, though golden afternoon still bathed the upland, pale tones of evening fell in their cleft between the hills. Nell's face showed pale, too, with a red line at the lips and darkness of night welling from under upturned curling lashes. She drooped against the tree and looked at him, first laughing at his serious figure, then languorous, offering herself in lieu of words. And under all her heart beat with a new apprehension.

Eric also looked—at her small, modish shoes, at the wrought frill of white peeping from under her pale-hued frock. His glance rose to the slimness of her waist girdled with orchid-colored ribbon, and rested where the diamond and emerald watch moved plainly as her quick breath came and went. Once he looked beneath the curling fringe of upturned lashes, full

into the passion of her gaze, and with that Eric went red, then white. But in a second his blue eyes dropped into the buckles on her shoes. Now, slowly, with composure, he felt in his pocket for cigarettes, struck his light, and gave a deliberate puff.

"This is a jolly place," said Eric. "Those pointed white things grow like spears. What do you call them?"

"Their name?" Nell trembled. "It's ugly—snake-root. Don't they always seem like lances of fairy knights pricking through an enchanted wood? Anything might happen here." Striving to be bold she lightly crooned fragments of a half-forgotten song.

"They're having a wedding in Elfinland . . ."

"Snake-root! Now I remember," said Eric. "That cures some poisons." Lighting a fresh cigarette at the red ash of his old one he fell to musing, unheeding of Nell's long glances. Leaning against the willow trunk she felt herself crucified to its rough bark. There Eric sat, true to his tryst, not three short yards away; Eric, her kingdom, where once she had only to command; broad shoulders made as a resting-place for her tired head; strong arms to encircle her slenderness, eyes and lips to woo or wait on hers. But Eric smoked a cigarette, three mortal yards away, now drifting into talk of common, senseless things—of the quick run his motor made, of polo games! Whom would she choose to fill their house in Horse Show week? He spoke, taking all for granted. Their honeymoon was over, life pressed upon them with guests and polo games. He looked into the future, and Nell—could only see three impassable yards of turf between a willow and a fallen log. Some spell was truly on her. Without a touch of his hand she lay powerless.

"Why don't you come to me?" she cried.

Then for a flash he met her glance, but quickly struck a match, sheltered it with his hollowed palm, saw that a fresh cigarette drew evenly.

"You've taught me how to wait, Nell," said Eric.

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And again they were so quiet that the squirrels came darting down the glade, scurried across the lace of Nell's parasol lying there in the waving grass, scolded and vanished.

"Queer little beggars!" said Eric.

"What have you been doing while I was gone?" Nell remembered a time when Eric waited on her lightest mood. She craved change, but a change to waiting and studying his moods had never crossed her fancy. She wanted sense of leisure, of freedom from distraction to take stock of the contents of her own soul. At the end she found herself unaltered. She was even forgetting all of herself but strange new pangs. What had he done while she was away? Her plan had held no provision for Eric during those fruitful weeks of self-communion.

Eric dropped into easy narrative. The time had gone in loafing. He had broken and bitted a colt, played games, dined with men.

"What did you say to them of me?—of my absence?" she pursued.

"Women are very queer," said Eric.

Ah! she was only "women" to him now. He stood off, he generalized. A month since on the terrace there it had been herself—and the others who did not count.

"How? Queer?" Nell felt afraid he might even cease talking with her.

Eric gave thought to his answer.

"Excuse my saying this, Nell, but the very best of you are sometimes a trifle vulgar. I hardly talk to men about my wife."

Nell raised a flag of truce. "What don't you understand, Eric?"

At last he frowned. "No more nonsense, Nell. If ever we are to get along together, you'll have to make it clear to me what this has been about. And be plain, Nell, very plain. You know I'm rather stupid."

Stupid! not that, but only strong and good—and, God in heaven! how beautiful, as he sat there, resisting her. "Do you want me to grow abject?" she implored him.

"As you like!" Eric killed the spark of his cigarette against the log. "Time

to be leaving, Nell, if we're to get home to dinner."

Turning away, he started down the path.

"Ah! wait a moment!" she called in tones of fear. "Come, please come to me."

"Nonsense, Nell!" He stopped, looking back frowning, not to be trifled with.

"It seems to me," she urged beseechingly, "that I'm fastened to this spot, bound like Sebastian to a forest tree. Without your hand I cannot leave it. Come nearer, only near enough for the smallest touch."

Shaking his head he faced her with folded arms, in quiet judgment.

"Eric! If I were on a spar, drowning in the sea, would you refuse me?" Half-lying against the willow's trunk Nell opened her arms. The glittering emerald jewel fluttered on her breast.

Slowly Eric came toward her. At last he spoke. "It is no trouble at all to begin changes, Nell. But later—where do they run to? Without your idea, whatever it was, I'd have gone on forever so. Then you started things. In fact, though I'm a slow creature, this time you've started me—to thinking." He smiled whimsically. "The worst of being clever, Nell. It's mildly catching."

"Why did you come here, then?" There was a hint of sobs in Nell's frightened question.

Eric looked at her as she lay along the slanted trunk. Her open arms hung limply, cajoleries had ceased. With hands thrust deep in pockets he answered shortly, "Come back to you? Of course. What else?"

"Then why?" she pleaded.

For safety he bent his eyes on a lanciolate head of snake-root, white and pointed. "It may not be the best way," he went on, "for a man to be taught by his wife, but it has happened. Before this I took life as it came—no questions. Then, coming back here, the sight of you, Nell, almost killed me. You know how it is when you've been chilled, sleighing, and come to sudden warmth, how the hot blood almost

bursts your veins? When you rested your cheek against my hand, the mere joy of you—but," he cut short the words she thirsted so to hear, "then it came, Nell. This might be the mere beginning of your pranks. You can be like quicksilver in my blood, like the heart, the marrow of things but for a month I've lived without you, for your whim. I can do it. You've taught me that, do you see? And now I must understand, to know if it's likely to threaten again, just why you left me, because . . ."

"Then we are at a deadlock," she interrupted, "since I can never tell."

"Suppose we go home, then." Politely he offered her his hand as if, all currents between them being severed, he could now do this without consequence.

"You still take me with you?" She slid chill fingers into his.

"Surely," he was grave, "we still belong together. There has been that between us. Only, after this it may be different. No doubt we'll both grow used—"

"Used to what?" She could not wait to know.

"It's not so bad," he offered. "Only used to being like other people."

Hand in hand, but a thousand leagues apart, on earth with heaven left behind, they began to descend the slope.

Whether her foolish heels caught on hidden root, whether she faltered from despair, or whether Nell stumbled from perfidious design and all but fell, perforce Eric must catch her with steady arm.

Her heart throbbed under his hand. She made no effort to support herself, she made no secret of her longing. "Eric," she let down all defenses, "how can I tell you what you ask?"

"Why not?" His lips brushed the pearl drop in her ear.

On a lofty bough overhead a thrush with beguiling note called to its mate. From the stone wall the squirrels ventured out and sat erect and bright-eyed, watching this curious human pair.

"Why can't you?" Was it to mark his meaning that Eric's arms tightened about her?

Then she answered: "Ah, my dear, if ever there came a second when I didn't want you as you are, on your own terms, I've now forgotten past recalling why it was. If ever from some fantastic folly I was afraid of loving you in the wrong way, I'm only now afraid that—no matter how or why—you may not love your wife!"

The squirrels might have wondered that so parched a man should slake his thirst at a slim girl's lips, rather than from the spring welling through cresses at his feet!

"It's worth a month of—hell," said Eric, "to be through with experiments. Dear, shall we go now?"

"Yes, please; you lead, I come after." And with bent head and serious eyes in which there lurked no question, Nell followed Eric along their homeward path.



THE PINES

By Arthur Stringer

I

THESE are the whispering pines,
And the selfsame song so low,
Where under the lash of God
I walked one year ago!
O aisles of murmuring shade,
When it seemed that hope had died,
And the black night filled the world,
How low to me then you sighed!

II

Today, how the earth o'erruns
With rapture and joy and Spring!
How golden the sunlight falls
Where the dark pines sigh and swing!
But thanks to the grief that wanes,
And the hope that wakes again,
My soul is as light as a bird's—
But the black pines sigh with pain!



AN UNPOPULAR AUTHOR

SCRAGGS—Have you read Brown's last book?
CYNIC—I hope so.

THE AWARD

By Catherine Carr

THIS is the story of two kinds of courage and their rewards; of their effect, the one upon the other, and their offices in the life of one Anthony Trent.

The first was physical and of uncommon quality for his years, it having been the saving of two children's lives at the risk of his own by stopping a runaway horse.

His reward for this was a place of distinction among his school-mates and an ornate medal presented by his townsmen, whose interest in the lad was touched by a grateful remembrance of his father, a doctor who had given his life for his fellows in a gallant fight against a yellow-fever epidemic some years before; the *Chronicle's* account of the incident, set forth under the caption, "The Son of His Father," being indeed almost as much a eulogy of the father as the son.

Tony, at twelve, found that he had much to live up to. His mother was at great pains to impress it upon him. She was an earnest little soul, a bit narrow and lacking in imagination, but possessed of all the domestic virtues and loving her only child with a concentrated affection which held something of the worship she had given to the husband she had never quite understood. Her translation of her son's obligations was most frequently presented as "being good." To Tony himself they appeared to consist in daring further than his companions in physical prowess.

These readings naturally came to occasional conflict. Lucy Trent was not of heroic mold, and while proud of

Tony's heroism she nourished chilling thoughts of what the result might have been, and was firm in her injunction against its repetition. All sports which had the element of personal risk were also under a ban that refused to recognize the urgency of what "the fellows" expected of him; and so Tony, amenable always to tears if not to what his mother called reason, came dangerously near to being the town's model boy. Only by grace of his modesty in regard to his deed of daring and his ability at the bat, did he escape the scorn given by school-boys to one held up for imitation by their mothers.

When he was ready to enter college a crisis was reached. It is doubtful if even the necessity of his education could have brought Lucy Trent to the point of sending her son from her, had not Tony's co-guardian, who was his father's brother, taken, as he said, "a hand."

He had watched with mute but distinct disapproval what he deemed "the making a 'sissy' of Anthony's boy," and when it came to his ears that his sister-in-law was designing to hire a tutor so that the boy's education might proceed under her supervision, he betook himself to that gentle-mannered lady and was exceeding firm with her. He was deaf to pleading and blind to tears. Such being the case, Lucy filled the days which intervened before Tony's departure with preparations for his physical comfort, and the evening hours with carefully sought-out precepts regarding his way of conduct. Both proceeded in a rather damp atmosphere.

Tony went to Medford, the college town, under the anxious escort of his mother and his uncle; his kinsman's uneasiness being occasioned by doubt of the boy's acquittal of himself when loosed from his mother's control.

"He's been coddled so that only a miracle can save him from being a milk-sop or kicking over all traces and acting the fool," he told his wife more than once.

He was a practical man of business, holding no faith in miracles, but he had the Southerner's faith in race and upon this he based his parting injunction to his nephew.

"Run straight and remember you're a Trent," he said, and resigned the youth to the workings of fate with a sense of duty done.

Lucy made her farewell dramatic. She suddenly produced Tony's medal and pinned it on his coat.

"Keep it—keep it clean, untarnished!" she cried between almost hysterically bestowed kisses; and Tony promised, swallowing hard to keep back the rapidly rising lump in his own throat.

Anthony Trent, aged eighteen, entered into college life, in the words of a world-worn Sophomore, the freshest of Freshmen; using the qualifying adjective in the sense of unsophistication. The alert young fellows whose faith in their own knowledge was seemingly unlimited, were of course ready enough to enlighten him, but some of their instruction was along ways which ran counter to Tony's medal-held pledges, and these he refused. Shyly, yet with amazing firmness, he remained steadfast even when loneliness pressed its weight.

Tony had a good allowance, with which he was generous, and he made an expensive fraternity, but somehow he never seemed to get to the centre of things. His training had not developed initiative and his mother's edict against athletics had closed this open sesame to college popularity. Also she had objected to a room-mate. So constant a companion would be sure to have much influence, and how was

one to know whether it would be for good, she had argued, jealous at the root, no doubt, of any influence that might in the least dispute her sway; and so it was that Tony had his pleasant rooms to himself and rather more time on his hands than was altogether well for healthy, full-blooded youth.

He employed it for the most part in reading, which unfortunately did little to alter the unworldly viewpoint his home life had engendered.

By-and-bye the "girl proposition," as pleasantly presented in college towns, came to his notice and attracted him, and in this way he might have filled a portion of the time which now and again hung heavily; frivolously, perhaps, yet well enough for youth. But feminine names creeping into his letters home brought forth again his mother's disapproval.

She wrote to him seriously about it. Such social pastimes, she averred, were better postponed until after a young man's studies were over. They could not fail to interfere with them. She wanted Tony to enjoy himself—indeed, she had no other desire in life save that for his good, but she was sure he would see that she was right.

Lucy Trent was popularly said to be "wrapped up" in her son, but like many a worshiper she made her worship a thing of much exaction from the idol. She had, indeed, since her husband's death narrowed her life's interests to Tony to the exclusion of all others, and though she was not definite about it even with herself, she pushed aside the probability of another woman's sometime possession of first place in Tony's life.

Tony saw, as had been his lifetime habit, from his mother's standpoint, a little regretfully, yet with no distinct heart disappointment; and again his letters were all of his work and of her, and again was Lucy Trent content.

His vacations were always spent at home, in close attendance upon his mother, and always he brought the record of class distinction. He was still upheld as a pattern to Carrollton youth, and he still disarmed the resent-

ment natural to such circumstance by his frank and unassuming manner.

So it was Tony came to his senior year, still on the edge of college life, and about Christmas-time what was to be expected happened. He met a girl.

This girl was very different from the well-poised, self-possessed maidens whom he had encountered in his infrequent ventures into Medford society, and the manner of their meeting was the sort to appeal to his poetry-fed strain of sentiment.

He was on his way home from a meeting of the literary society of which he was the leading spirit, when a girl and a man turned into the street from the crossing ahead. As they passed through the swaying circle of illumination cast by the arc-light Tony recognized the young man as a Junior of unsavory repute, and at the same time he perceived that the girl was trying to escape from his escort. She had quickened her pace until it was almost a run, and she vouchsafed nothing more than a headshake to his voluble flow of words.

Tony involuntarily hastened his own steps and placed the bundle of papers he carried in his coat pocket.

"But, my dear girl," he heard the fellow insist, "how can you tell that you don't care to know me without making my acquaintance? It isn't logical at all—old Fountaine'll tell you so. Honestly now, I'm not a bad fellow. All the girls like me, and I sure do like pretty girls, and you're the prettiest girl I've seen this month of Sundays. Come on now and be friendly——"

He placed a detaining hand on her arm, but she shrank from him and her glance involuntarily cast about for help—neither had heard Tony's snow-muffled footsteps—and her eyes lighted when she saw him so near.

"Oh, please——" she began, and further appeal was unnecessary.

Tony shot out a chivalrous if commonplace fist, which took the fellow

under the jaw and sent him prone on the pavement, and his other arm took the burden of the frightened girl, with more of tremor than the avenging member. This sort of thing was new to Tony.

She clung to him with little cries for a few moments. The dazed young gallant, meanwhile, escaped from further contact with the unexpected prowess of one whom he designated "a poler." The realization that her head was upon a strange young man's shoulder sent the girl from him, blushing consumingly.

"Oh, thank you—thank you so much," she panted. "I'm—I'm so glad you came."

"So am I," Tony said rather inadequately. All of his senses seemed concentrated in looking at the girl, who was in truth a typical figure of romance.

Her eyes were big and blue and very appealing, her hair showed floss gold from beneath her small dark hat, and her mouth was small and red, and with the corners drooped like a frightened child's. Tony's most salient impulse was to take her again into the protecting circle of his arm. It appeared so entirely the right place for her.

"I—I must go now," she faltered, obviously confused by his unconsciously steady gaze. "Grandfather will be worried about me."

"You mustn't go alone," Tony protested, getting proper grasp of the senses at last. "You must allow me to see you safely home. Of course you don't know me, but——"

"Oh, yes, I do. You're Anthony Trent. I've seen you lots of times and read about you in *The Classman*—when you won the debate with the 'Varsity, you know."

"But why haven't I ever seen you?" Tony's tone distinctly took the scheme of things to task.

The girl flushed even deeper as they walked on together.

"Oh, I don't go around very much," she said a little haltingly.

In the course of their walk the reason

was disclosed; also most of her small history.

Her name was Gray—Bessie Gray—which commended itself to Tony as fitting, somehow, and she was an orphan and lived with her grandfather, who kept a small book and stationery shop—her late errand this night had been to procure some medicine for him. Furthermore, she had lived in Medford but a year and knew few people, save as she knew Tony, by sight and *Classman* repute.

Tony understood this. He had been instructed in the laws of caste which in the South are almost as rigid as the Brahmin's own, but scarcely to the conclusion perhaps desired. He perceived clearly that she was superior to the class to which it had pleased an unkind fate to call her, and this, too, was an added feature of romance.

"I—I hope that you feel that you know me well enough to allow me to—to call," he ventured when they paused for parting at the side door of the little shop, behind which it was evident her residence was maintained.

Bessie's eyes grew frankly big and delighted.

"O-h, of course—if you would care to come."

Tony was definite on that point.

"I should, very much," he said. "And—and if anything happens that you must go out late like this again—I—wish you would let me know. I should only be too glad to—to escort you—or attend to it for you—"

"Oh!" Bessie murmured again. To her it was as if stars were descending. "Thank you so much."

Then they ventured a shy hand-clasp and Tony went his way, after taking thought for the first time in his twenty-two years as to the manner of the lifting of his hat.

For the first time, too, a girl's face hindered and invaded his dreams; and daylight did not banish it. He looked upon its fair curves when he should have seen his Euclid—its wonder of red lips and blue eyes; perceiving more and more the vast pity of their humble setting.

Tony's sense of caste was, he told himself, the reasonable sort which could recognize exceptions, and certainly he was impressed with the obviousness of this girl's exceptional quality. Anyone could see, even when she was in her plain garb, that she was fitted for a much higher station. Attired in one of those frilly white arrangements such as the girls wore to the "frat" dances she would be what his colloquial companions would term "a peach." Tony had a singular thrill of almost personal gratification that this should be so, and of resentment that she should be kept housed in a box of a shop, knowing nothing of the world save what she saw through the narrow door. Surely it was a shame—quite the thing to draw out what spirit of knight-errantry a man might possess.

The second evening after their meeting Tony called at the obscure book-shop, which was not patronized by the college crowd. Bessie greeted him with a charming confusion of blushes and shy glances, and she was seen to be even prettier in her white blouse and trim skirt of dark blue, and without her hat; for now one saw the dear little rings of fair hair which clustered about her white forehead, and better, too, her beautiful eyes.

The old grandfather was scarcely cordial at first, only thanking Tony formally for his assistance to Bessie. He was an unworldly dreamer; but dwellers in college towns cannot escape the knowledge of the ofttime baleful consequence of friendships between handsome young students and pretty maidens of low degree. Tony's very evident sincerity of manner, however, shortly had its way with the old man, and won a welcome as warm as Bessie's own.

This was a period of time to which Tony, for his part, gave little thought. Probably from his viewpoint there was no need of meditation, when he was existing in so eminently satisfying a present—a present which soon came to be encompassed by the confines of the little sitting-room back of the little book-shop.

It was a mere box of a room with

nothing to attract in its cheap furniture, its atrocities of tinted plaster casts on the mantel, its chenille-embroidered table and chair-scarfs. It had nothing, indeed, which appealed to the artistic taste which was innately Tony's, but it was illumined by the presence of Bessie, who openly hung on his words, saying but little herself.

Tony was very happy, despite the fact that for the first time his letters to his mother were not complete in their transcript of his doings. This experience was altogether epoch-making for Tony. It is even to be feared that he argued the matter out with that aforesaid uncompromising conscience of his with something of sophistry. Late hours had been a part of his mother's objection to social diversions—and the hours he was keeping were anything but late. She had indicated the effect of these same diversions upon his studies, and was he not successfully accomplishing his tasks and spoken of as sure of class honors? Fault could not possibly be found with a companionship which served but to make these tasks easy and life more fair. Still, he found it difficult to make such things clear in a letter. He would tell his mother all about it when she came up to Commencement, and he would introduce Bessie, whom she would be sure to like. Bessie was so gentle, so sweet and shy; so entirely unlike the society girls whose forthright manners his mother had condemned.

So it was that Tony stilled even the smallest questioning voice and lived his Winter of content, scarcely conscious of why tasks were easy and life was fair, until the coming of the Springtime.

It was a night of white moon magic. Bessie and Tony had been for a walk, and both had been inclined to silence. It was as if the soul floated apart from all bodily hampering in a roseate mist, and words were needless.

At the gate Tony took the girl's hand in his to say good night, and she lifted her eyes—such deep, such blue, blue eyes; such eyes as poets sing of,

set round with lashes worthy of affecting the history of the world. And Tony looked deep into them, and there it all was, clearly to be read; all of life's mysteries and their reason—why the mist was rose and the light of molten silver. And the reason was love, and the pulse of it was strong in his young blood.

The actual moment of illumination was brief, but its afterglow burned away the delicate tint of Bessie's cheeks and beat down her eyelids, and cast her into a tumult of delicious confusion. Involuntarily she withdrew her hand. It was to come, of course, and her heart beat with the joy of it, but it was not for maidens to urge its coming—perceptibly. Also there was another sense catching at her breath—almost of fear, which she could not understand.

"Good—good night," she murmured a little blankly.

"Good night," Tony echoed in a tone equally void of expression. He, too, was a bit dazed by this sudden rending of the veil, yet he went to his rooms wrapt about with the glory of it—deep under the conviction of the inadequacy of the poets' telling. Tony had not arrived to love by the usual disillusioning approaches of flirtation, and he was awed by its wonders, its potentialities.

The photograph of his mother upon the mantel caught his eye as he entered his study, and served to temper his exaltation with self-reproach—the reproach of possessing this marvel and not sharing it with her. He sat down at once to write to her of it, and here he realized why the poets had failed. It was utterly impossible to find written phrase for such ecstasy. Again and again he tried, and at last, remembering that the next day was Saturday, he threw some clothes into his case and took the late train for home.

Tony traveled with his imagination outstripping the engine's speed. There entered into his mind no question of his mother's reception of this joy that had come to him. Had she not repeatedly told him that she lived for him alone,

and was not the natural conclusion that his joy would be hers? He made little plans of a future whose happiness included all three of them.

Lucy was at her desk beginning her daily letter to her son the next morning when his step sounded in the hall and sent her hurrying to the door of her sitting-room, delighted and questioning. Whatever misgiving she might have felt was set at rest by sight of his face. The mark of joy was upon it to be read by the runner. He caught her up in his arms and kissed her with the ardor of its exuberance.

"Dear little mother!" he cried.

"Dearest boy," she said, still wondering at his shining eyes. "Why—is anything the matter?"

"Oh, no!" Tony took a turn of the room with a springing step and stood again before her, tall and well-knit of figure, handsome of face—a son indeed to be proud of. He was *her* son. She had reared him to this model of brain and brawn. The wonder of it came to her.

"Everything's all right," he said, "very much all right." He dropped his hands on her shoulders, flushing but meeting her gaze frankly. "I'm in love—I'm going to be married—if she'll consent."

"*In love! Married!*" Lucy Trent gasped the echo with the accent of incredulous repulsion, and she crumpled under his hands.

There was another moment of revelation for Tony while he got his mother to a chair and knelt at her side, holding her hands in his own; revelation which was the revolution of his world; all of his night-old visions of a happiness shared by three. His mother did *not* rejoice with him—and yet she had said that she lived for him alone. The mark of joy on Tony's young face was wiped out by the grave puzzle of it.

"Mother—why, mother, what is the matter?" he urged, but she pushed him from her and buried her face in her hands, sobbing bitterly.

Tony got up slowly, as with stiffened muscles, and went over and stood lean-

ing against the mantel-shelf. He understood, yet it seemed so impossible. He looked about the room. It was all very familiar, and also very eloquent of himself. Here were the drawings of his early effort, the gifts he had made to his mother at various birthdays and Christmases, some of them absurd examples of boyish choice; a cumbersome rack of shelves when he had had the scroll-saw craze, and a weird-looking stuffed owl. All had been kept closely treasured and about her because of love of him, and yet now she was not glad. Here, too, was the couch where he had lain during his convalescences from childish illnesses, and his mother had enlivened the tedium by reading to him and playing games. It was a room of tender memories, this one. And there was the old-fashioned rocker by which he had from infancy made confession of his faults and told of his hopes and plans. And there in that selfsame chair his mother now sat weeping because of his joyous hopes and plans.

But why? Tony asked himself, and though he searched deeply he could find no answer. His tongue seemed bound against putting the question to her. He waited, miserable to the core, his fingers abstractedly busy with the small ornaments on the mantel.

At last Lucy lifted her head and fixed her tearful eyes upon her son.

"Who—who is she?" she asked, and her tone was the hardening of tender impulses.

But instantly was Tony again on his knees beside her, pouring out his confidences. Surely, *surely* she would see—now.

"The dearest girl—so sweet and good," he fairly bubbled. "You will love her, mother, I know——"

"Who is she?"

"Bessie Gray. Her grandfather keeps a book-store at Medford, and——"

"Gray—Gray? What Grays?"

"I don't know." Tony put aside this question as of no import. "They're not rich, they're not society people. Bessie helps in the store, but she's the loveliest——"

"A shop-girl!"

It was a cry of scorn and reproach. Lucy Trent's unformed, but no less certain, opposition had its text.

"My son," she said, "a Trent and a Carroll, would marry a *shop-girl*?"

"But mother," Tony protested, "she's good and beautiful and—and I love her!"

His mother winced at the words. The lump rose again in her throat, but she fought it back. This was the time for reasoning. She remembered of reading of such hours being the certain portion of motherhood, and the methods of dealing with them.

"You *think* you love her," she said, with an effort toward calmness, "but you are a boy and you don't understand what love really is. You are now willing to let a pretty face outweigh your obligations to your name, your father's memory and to me—but you would forever regret it. Listen," she said, and she drew for him pictures of the life resulting from a marriage beneath one's station. For the first time Lucy developed imagination and was vivid. She told him, cruelly, of the impossibility of this low-born maid adjusting herself to the standards of his class; of his inevitable embarrassment and shame of her. Also, he was a Trent, a Carroll and a Dabney. Every illustrious ancestor was brought forth, and his father's noble sacrifice, even his own medal, which he was pledged to honor, were variously marshaled against one young woman of fair face. And *her* devotion, *her* care! Again and again Tony heard, sorrowfully, reproachfully, that his mother had given up her life to him; but for a long time it failed to reach him.

"But mother, it is you who don't understand," he would say. "Bessie would look all right in a palace—*anywhere*, and—and I love her."

His mother's irresponsiveness to this argument was of all others the thing Tony could not understand.

Over and over the matter was threshed, all that day and the next, a day of wretched unrest for mother and son. Lucy reasoned, appealed

and grew hysterical; and on Monday morning Tony went forth weighted with defeat. He had given his promise to end his affair with "that shop-girl."

Tony's uncle had perhaps been right in saying that Lucy's disposition had the mildly unyielding quality of a bale of cotton.

It was a youth whose eyes were very grave and whose face was very pale who made the journey back to Medford, his sense of what was due the girl sadly at war with his specified obligations as a son; the desire of his blood fighting the exactions of his race.

His plan of life had to do with renunciation now. Just once he would see Bessie—it was not in nature to refuse one last meeting—and explain. Then he would work hard until after Commencement, and then—he saw an ungleamed future of lean, gray days, and their weight was leaden on his heart.

Tony went to this last interview with his sacrificial intentions graven deep in the resolution and on his drawn young face.

Bessie met him with a gladness in her eyes and a smile which was like a knife-thrust to the lad, and which put before him even more vividly the marvel of how he was to live without her. Still, he had promised and a Trent's pledge must be inviolate.

Their greeting was constrained, but the girl, who had learned from the romances with which her pretty head was filled that a man was distraught when approaching the ultimate moment, made such happy translation of his grave looks and heavy silences, and chattered inconsequently herself in her maiden tumult of shyness and desire for what he was to say.

One hour passed, and then two, and Tony had not spoken—either the question Bessie desired or the farewell his mother had exacted. They talked on the trivial edge of things; of a book she had just read—she got it and they looked at the illustrations—of Field Day scores, even of the weather, and the coils of his fate

seemed to wind about and to stifle Tony.

He looked about this little room, grown so familiar and dear, and finally thought that what he had to say might be easier to speak out-of-doors. So he suggested that they go for a walk.

They passed out and along the moon-whitened streets, and silence possessed them as on that recent night when they had read in each other's eyes what they deemed the law and letter of selection. Memory of that moment held the thoughts of both.

When they reached the river bank, by tacit consent they sat down on a fallen tree.

Poor Tony was very young, and his knowledge in some ways was small, and his choice of a resting-place was not the choice of wisdom.

It was a spot which provided a vastly more fit setting for love's consummation than its sacrifice, for here were exquisite effects of moonlight and tree-shade, and the rich scent of flowers. Now and again one could hear the high, sweet note of some night-bird, plunging into the crystalline stillness like a silver dart, and drawing the heart-beat of response as a magnet draws steel. Here, touching his arm, was fair girl-flesh—such very fair flesh.

Tony turned his eyes from their moody contemplation of the gently moving silver ribbon which was the river between lush green banks, and made a mental inventory of the charms of the young girl at his side: the soft curves, the pink-and-whiteness, the aureole of fair hair and the red, red sweetness which was girl-lips. What more, in the name of one's body and blood, could a man want? And it was all his if he willed! Tony's knowledge in such ways might be small, but he knew this with the instinct that is quick in young blood in the Springtime—his to have and to hold. And his mother forbade, and he had promised denial. And then while he looked and knew these things, Bessie lifted her lashes, and again was Tony lost in the depths of her eyes.

"Bessie!" he cried, and his voice was hoarse and suddenly fevered, "Bessie!"

He crushed her almost with fury within his arms and kissed her, and boy and girl swung clear of earth.

There is an undefeatable law of nature which wills that whatever swings far in one direction must in turn swing far in the opposite.

In the clear, bright sunshine of the next morning Tony sat stripped of exultation and heavily aware of the earth. His young face was even more drawn and haggard than it had been the day before, his eyes more despairing. They were eyes which had avoided their mirrored reflection that morning.

On the table before him lay an open velvet jeweler's case in which reposed the medal his townspeople had given him for bravery, and, clenched fast in his hand resting beside it, was a small bow of light blue ribbon—strangely contrasting trophies. Because of that bow of ribbon Tony had been unable to meet his own eyes. The night before it had showed dainty, alluring, through the lacework of Bessie's blouse—and now—now it lay in his hand.

Tony had come to much knowledge during the hours which had passed since he had swung clear of earth, but he was still dazed and wondering. Causes remained unreadable, but effects were distinct and—far-reaching.

His mental conflict lasted until noon, when Tony closed the medal's case and locked it in its accustomed drawer of his desk, and the bow of ribbon, innocent-looking and light blue, he thrust into the chiffonier, the full length of the room away. Never should they come in contact, these trophies. He went out, decision showing in the setting of his broad shoulders.

That very decision some hours later brought two young people before a minister of a neighboring town. They were white-faced and their quiet had not the aura of rapturous confusion, and they took upon them their marriage vows with a solemnity that was almost chilling. The holy man, who

might have doubted their years, asked no questions, but blessed them and made anxious prayers, after they were gone, for their troubled young souls. And again the late train carried Anthony Trent to have speech with his mother.

He was physically worn and mentally spent. There were no thrills of rapture in his recollections, none in his anticipations. And he wanted, suddenly, intensely, the things that he had been prone to regard lightly: the trivial gaiety of Commencement festivity, of tennis and the companionship of crowds. Their forfeited value was now high, and his portion of life a galling weight; yet it was all, quite all that he deserved. No pulse of Tony's was yet so strong as that of self-loathing.

His mother was out when he reached home, and he awaited her return in her sitting-room; and again its familiar purities were alien. He, standing in the centre of the room, stiffly, with a strained white face, was more alien still. Surely he was in no wise related to the boy of those cheerful convalescences, of those happy confidences, even to the youth who two days ago had spoken here of love, for he had lived all of life since then and come to a great age.

The sight of him so was like a blow against her eyes when Lucy Trent entered the room.

"Tony!" she cried out in something almost of terror. Her hands involuntarily reached toward him, but an invisible restraint seemed to hold her bound.

"I am married," he said, without preface.

"*Married!*" his mother repeated. "*Married!*"

Mechanically she withdrew the pins from her hat and removed it. "After your promise—your *oath—married!*"

And again there was an awful hour of wild reproach, of tears and sobs; wilder, more bitter, more hysterical even than before.

She came to calmness with the suggestion of divorce.

"It can be easily arranged," she said. "Money will do anything with people of that class, and I am willing to make any sacrifice—do with one servant, wear old clothes—*anything*. I have lived only for you—I always shall—and I cannot let your life be spoiled. With your Uncle Clayton's help it might be so quietly arranged that it need not become public. I'll ring him up right away."

She started toward the telephone, but Tony laid a detaining hand upon her arm and shook his head. And it was not for reproach that the course she urged had its charm for him. It meant shifting the burden which pressed so heavily, meant the possible possession of those gay golden things of youth which somehow he had missed—relief for his young brain from the financial perplexities which were already presenting themselves. It meant all these things and, perhaps because he was very weary, they were things which seemed very well. Yet it meant, too, that thing which made it impossible for him to meet his mirrored eyes, and because of that his negative was firm.

"Never!" he said. And then again did his mother tell off his illustrious line, his obligations.

"How do you think your father would bear it—to know that you've married a girl like that? When he so honored his name—oh, he is fortunate to be dead. I wish to heaven that I were, too, after all my care of you, all my trying to raise you right. Oh," she moaned, pacing to and fro and wringing her hands, "it is terrible—*terrible* to be a mother! It is the curse put upon women. How shall I face the world—the people who have always praised you? And *you*—how can *you* meet the people who rewarded you for bravery—?"

"That was why," Tony said, "I had to keep my medal—clean—for—my son—"

Lucy Trent stared dumbly for the agonized space of a breath, grasping, vaguely at first, then with sickening definiteness, the significance of her

son's words. And all her untried virtue was militant against it. Her small mouth and chin grew granite. She spoke, and her voice sounded thin, strained, cutting; the cutting of bonds.

"Go!" she said. "Go! God help me, I have no son!"



HIS PHILOSOPHICAL WAY

By Tom P. Morgan

"WHEN I peruse my newspaper," grimly said the Old Codger, "I hunt the obscure corners where lurk the chunks of wisdom dug up by the exchange editors; and here I learn that the King of Ashanti has 3,332 wives; that in Berne, Switzerland, was recently organized the Vierdeziliterabgabepetition society for combating the café proprietors' proposal to increase the price of beer; that a young Jones is born somewhere in the world every thirty-nine minutes; that lately, while scratching his nose with the muzzle of a loaded revolver a prominent citizen of Izzard County, Arkansas, inadvertently pulled the trigger and was surprised to find that he had blown his nose for the last time; that a bashful dentist out in New Harmony, Indiana, fell in love with a maiden said to be a little out of her teens, which I s'pose means that she was well into her thirty-sixes, and proposed to her by engraving his declaration of undying affection on the plate of the upper set of false teeth he had made for her; and so on and so forth.

"While the careless and thoughtless may scoff at such stuff as being useless and non-essential, it fills and satisfies me, for the reason that I have only just so much time to devote to reading and if I occupy it in absorbing that innocuous information I at least avoid reading the flapdoodle about the foibles of society, the dismal details of the latest fashionable murder, the thousand and one graft exposures, the foolishness of the perennial Pole-hunters, and the flamboyant pointings with pride and pusillanimous viewings with alarm of the million or more office-seekers that infest us, and contentedly conclude that the world is at least standing still instead of horrifiedly deciding that it is growing worse every day it whirls."



YES, INDEED

"WHAT are soft drinks, papa?"

"The kind that are hard to take, Bobbie."



"THAT man whom Juliet is going to marry is no fool."

"Oh, well, she takes him for what he is worth."

FABLES OF THE FUTURE

THE IMPOSTOR

By Harold Eyre

HE was the only son of a trust magnate who had won universal respect by his sterling dishonesty and unfailing disregard for the rights of others.

Great care had been bestowed upon the young man's education, and he had been given every advantage that wealth and solicitude could afford, in the hope that he would become a thoroughly useless and disreputable member of society.

Devoted to his parents and anxious to please them, he spared no pains to carry out their wishes, and being studious and persevering by nature, he realized the value of time and of systematic effort. He knew how much wickedness the world contained, but undismayed by the magnitude of his task, determined to acquire as much of it as was possible for one human being to do. As soon as he had formed all the ordinary and conventional bad habits of mankind, he devoted himself assiduously to the cultivation of the most abstruse and difficult vices. Difficulties, indeed, only spurred him to keener endeavor, and many a night, in his zeal, he forgot to go to bed. A day whose setting sun had seen no unworthy act of his he regarded as a day eternally wasted.

Small wonder that his diligent toil should be crowned with success, so that his friends pointed him out as a shining example of depravity, and his father declared with pride that he was a true chip of the old block.

Alas! not even the worst of us are exempt from the far-reaching and in-

sidious power of goodness. One night the young man went to the theatre to see a play which, according to its title, was a perfectly immoral production, such as any gentleman could witness without losing his self-respect. To the young man's disgust, the piece turned out to be a sermon in disguise, a cunning and unscrupulous appeal to one's better nature, depicting in lurid hues the strange delights of rectitude and morality.

In spite of his natural distaste for such pleasures, the young man's imagination was stimulated, his peace of mind upset. The poison had done its work. To his horror, he found that his conscience, so long and so happily dormant, had awakened, and thenceforth, night and day, he was tormented by a desire to be good.

Although he struggled bravely, the temptation was too strong; he yielded and, shamefully and in secret, indulged in an act of unselfishness and self-denial.

His remorse was short-lived; those who know the enslaving power of virtue will readily surmise what followed. One good action led to another and before the young man realized his danger, he was leading a blameless life.

For some time he succeeded in hiding his shame from the world, but gradually it leaked out. His friends began to look askance at him, and it was rumored that he was a deep-dyed hypocrite, a sheep in wolf's clothing; that while pretending to be wholly bad he was in reality giving himself up to secret indulgence in the cardinal virtues.

When these damaging reports came to his father's ears a terrible scene ensued. The old man raged and wept alternately over his disgrace, accused his unnatural son of a desire to bring his parent's bald head in sorrow to the grave, and turned the young man out of the house.

The poor fellow—for after all we

must sympathize with the weak—fled from all who knew him, changed his name and took up his residence in the slums.

Abandoning himself recklessly to his fate, he led a life of unmitigated goodness and became so hardened in morality that the most virtuous action brought no remorse.



HEALED

(MILTON IN HEAVEN)

By Edward Wilbur Mason

O H, now am I no longer blind!
Out of mine empty eyes I see;
Yet I do miss the sorrow kind
That gave Song's gift to me!

I worship in bright heaven's ways,
But ah! I loved my darkness dim.
And now forevermore I gaze
Upon the seraphim;

For I have lost my paradise—
Those visions blest that lit my night;
And at each gate, lo! my healèd eyes
Stand guard with flaming Light!



AND HE DESERVED FAME

"WAS he made famous by the witty anecdotes he told?"
"No, by the witty anecdotes he didn't tell."



MISS GUSHER—Do you sing, Mr. Quick?
MR. QUICK—No, I haven't any vices.

SONG

By Charles Hanson Towne

I SAW the day's white rapture
Die in the sunset's flame,
But all her shining beauty
Lives like a deathless name.

Our lamps of joy are wasted—
Gone is Love's hallowed light,
But you and I remember
Thro' every starlit night.



IMPERATIVE

FIRST DOCTOR (*in consultation*)—Do you think an operation is necessary?
SECOND DOCTOR—Of course. I need the money—don't you?



NO RECOVERY

MRS. GRAMERCY—Have you ever lost any of your jewels?
MRS. PARK—Only that lovely cook I used to have.



GILT-EDGED

TED—Do you think that's a good scheme of his?
NED—It must be. He's putting his own money into it and not telling anybody about it.

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THE OCTOBER "SMART SET"

Good stories of newspaper life are not written every day; and only a few of those which are published meet with any measure of success. "The Smart Set" feels itself fortunate in having secured for the coming number a remarkably fine novelette dealing with this phase of life—a story that will unquestionably attract wide attention because of its sincerity, its dramatic power, and its deep human interest. It is entitled

"THE RULES OF THE GAME"

BY WILLIAM R. LIGHTON

The short stories following the novelette are told with unusual skill. The authors will be James Hopper, May Harris, William Hamilton Osborne, Owen Kildare, Johnson Morton, Edna Kenton, Frederic Taber Cooper, and Temple Bailey; and the essay will be in Maurice Francis Egan's happiest vein, and called "The Food of the Heroes."

Poems from such favorite writers as Curtis Hidden Page, Arthur Stringer, Robert Gilbert Welsh, Samuel Minturn Peck, Theodosia Garrison and Elsa Barker will also appear.

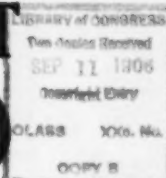
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THE NOVEMBER "SMART SET"

It is not often that so striking a story comes to an editor's desk as that which opens the next number. It deals in a powerful way with the emotional side of a woman's nature, and moves rapidly to its dramatic and unforeseen conclusion. Every reader will follow with interest this really great novelette, entitled

"THE CONFLICT," By EMMA WOLF

A story by JACK LONDON will be one of the features of the November issue; and RICHARD LE GALLIENNE will contribute one of his most delightful essays, happily called "The World and the Lover," a piece of writing as exquisite as anything the author has done. Other contributors will be Inez Haynes Gillmore, Dorothea Deakin, Grace Mac Gowan Cooke, Ellis Parker Butler, Harriet Gaylord and Mary Tracy Earle.

Poems by favorite writers will also appear.

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THE DECEMBER "SMART SET"

There will be two very notable contributions in the next issue of THE SMART SET. One will be a powerful novel, with an English setting, and a theme wonderful for its virility and strong note of passion. The title is

"THE SHOULDER-KNOT," By MRS. HENRY DUDENEY

The second great feature will be the publication of the one-act play from the French of George Docquois, "After the Opera." This play proved the sensation of Paris during the past season, and it will soon be acted in this country by Mr. Arnold Daly. THE SMART SET is particularly fortunate in being able to present it to its readers at this time. The play is a remarkable example of the modern French mastery of the technique of the drama, and its absorbing story will hold American readers.

The short stories will be by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, William Hamilton Osborne, Grace MacGowan Cooke, Mary Moss and Anne Warner. The essay will be from Gelett Burgess's brilliant pen, and well-known verse-writers will supply the poetry.

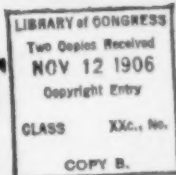
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THE JANUARY "SMART SET"

Jack London will contribute what is probably his finest short story, entitled "When God Laughs," to the forthcoming number of *THE SMART SET*. Every reader will be on the qui vive for this really remarkable tale.

The novelette will be entitled

"BROKEN STATUES," By JULIEN GORDON

Mrs. Cruger's work is so well known that any comment is unnecessary. Certain it is that this story will add materially to her reputation as a writer.

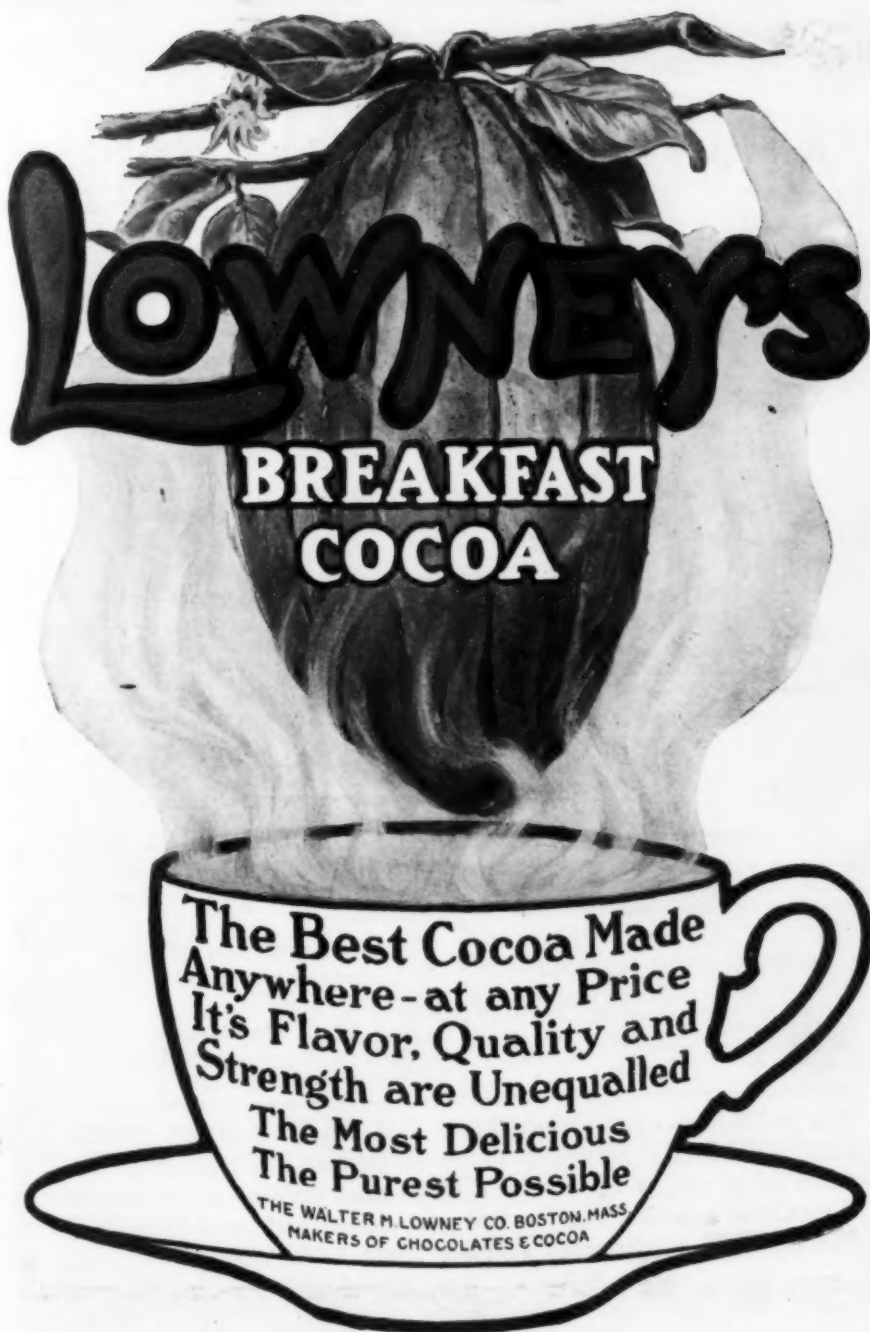
William Hamilton Osborne, one of the most popular of the younger magazine writers, will be represented by a long story, called "The Taint o' the Lag"; and there will be a detective story by Burton E. Stevenson, a newspaper story by Frederick Orin Bartlett, a humorous story by W. H. G. Wyndham Martyn; a Creole story by M. E. M. Davis; a story of sentiment and realism by Katharine Metcalf Roof and a New York boarding-house story by Algernon Tassin. In addition, there will be a delightful romantic one-act play, told in verse, by William C. de Mille and John Erskine, and an essay by Bliss Carman.

Clinton Scollard will contribute a ballad, and other poems will be by Aloysius Coll, Arthur Stringer, Theodosia Garrison, Elsa Barker, John Vance Cheney and Archie Sullivan.

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AINSLEE'S FOR DECEMBER



*A
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*"The
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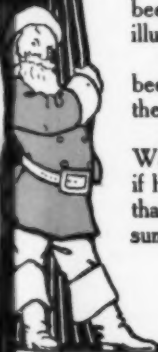
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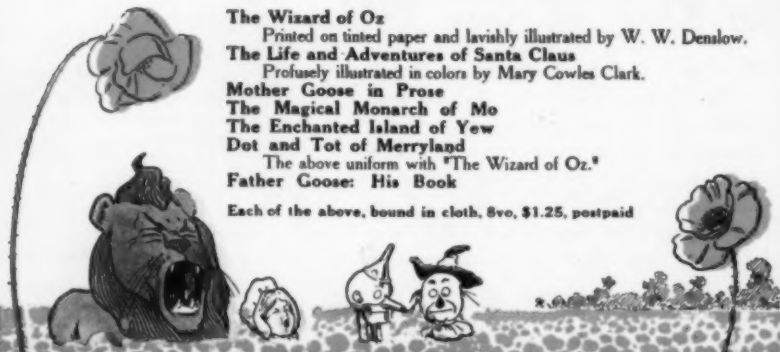
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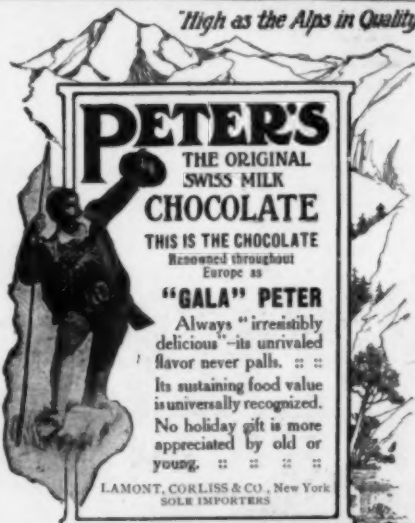
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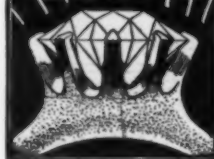
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Send me your order for a trial hundred of the size and value you prefer. Try the cigarettes—smoke the full hundred if you wish. If you don't like them, say so and your money will be *instantly* returned. You need not trouble to return any of the cigarettes. I will take my chances on your giving any you don't want to someone who *will* like them and who *will* order more.

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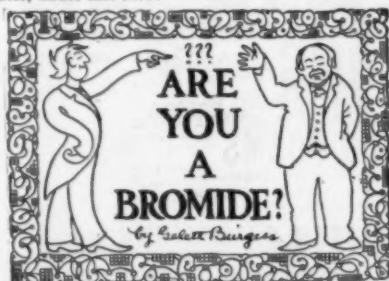
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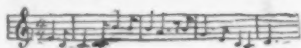


You Can Not Buy This Picture



Drawn by C. Clyde Squires

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An Old Love Song

The size of the charming picture (of which this is a reproduction in miniature) is 10½x15 inches. The large print is a sepia photogravure, plate marked. It is hand-printed on Exora steel-plate paper, 19x24, ready for framing.

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Solves the Xmas problem



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Style L
Chased Sterling
No. Price
L-222 \$6.00
L-224 8.00
18-Kt. Gold Filled
L-0324 \$10.00
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Style N
Filigree Sterling
No. Price
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N-14 Fil. 7.00
N-15 Fil. 8.50
N-16 Fil. 9.50
N-18 Fil. 12.00
18-Kt. Gold Filled
N-0512 Fil. \$10.00
N-0514 Fil. 12.50
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N-514 Fil. \$25.00

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Get the Genuine — There are imitations

For Man or Woman — Boy or Girl

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you can get at the best barber shop in the world.

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Comparison is all we ask. We want to send the Auto Strop Safety Razor on trial, particularly to men who have tried the "theory razors." We want you to compare the Auto Strop with the razor you are using or the razor you have tried to use.

Send us \$5.00 on deposit—we send you the complete outfit—handsome case, containing razor, fine strop and 12 of the finest blades. Try it—test it any and every way for a month; then if you would rather have \$5 than the Auto Strop Razor—simply send it back to us express collect, and we will return your money without a question.

(This offer is especially to men who think the razor they are using now is just about the best.)

Don't confuse the Auto Strop Razor with the "theory razors." It's not that kind of a razor.

The Auto Strop Razor does not depend on soft, thin blades for its success—the tougher and stiffer the beard the better—and that's the real test of a real razor.

The blades of the Auto Strop Razor are simply the finest, hardest, strong steel blades that human beings can make—they are as fine as the blades of the most expensive barber's razor. That's why they do the work.

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You don't "remove the blade."

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In one minute you are as good a stropper as a barber who has spent 40 years stropping.

When you try an Auto Strop Razor the first thing that dawns on you is that you had almost forgotten how gentle and luxurious a shave could be. Any old blade seems sharp enough—until you compare it with an Auto Strop blade that is *really* sharp.

The Auto Strop Safety Razor is a complete razor outfit, including a fine leather strop and 12 of the finest, hardest steel blades. One Auto Strop Safety Razor, complete, will last a lifetime. The automatic stropping keeps the blades in perfect condition, insures the finest, smoothest shaves, and keeps the skin in perfect condition. It is a practical razor, with practical blades—not a "theory" razor.

It's because the Auto Strop Blades are strong, practical blades—it's because the Auto Strop Blades are **stropped** and kept really sharp—it's because they are real barber razor blades of the finest steel made—that's why the Auto Strop Safety Razor will last you a lifetime—that's why the Auto Strop Razor will give as soft, as smooth, as comfortable a shave as

WM. T. HODGE: The creator of "Hiram Stubbins," in "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," says:—

"It's as pleasant to shave with the Auto Strop Razor as it is to remove sparkling spring water from a golden goblet on a hot summer's day."

Called "Auto Strop" because it *strops* automatically.

DON'T remove blade, DON'T take razor apart, DON'T buy new blades.

DIRECTIONS:
Slip the strop through the razor.

Move razor back and forth. Fast as you like. Blade *strops* ever automatically with the true barber-stroke. From stropping to really luxurious shaving in **One Second.**

Won't YOU try it?

OFFER: 30 days' free trial (and money pleasantly back), on deposit of price, \$5.

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The expert barber, when he cares to do so, and has the time, gives you the gentlest, smoothest shave in the world. Haven't you noticed that a good barber always strops his razor just before starting? The keenest blade in the world is better, and gentler for a little stropping. What makes the shave so gentle is the *stropping*. It is only a theory that a razor will shave as well without stropping. Ask any barber why he strops his razors. Ask why he doesn't use the "theory blades" that "don't need stropping." Never was there made a piece of steel strong enough to shave the average man comfortably that didn't need stropping. You know by experience that stropping *does* make a lighter, finer shave.

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As you are probably a busy man, we give you here references and other guarantees of safety and satisfaction, so you can accept this Price-Deposit-Trial *without further correspondence.* Send us \$5 in any safe form and the deposit will be returned to you any time in 30 days if you desire.



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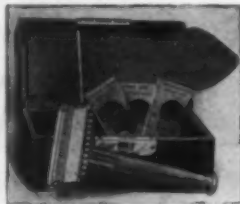
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Auto Strop Safety Razor Co.,

330 Broadway, New York City.

Book: If you want further information before making the trial we offer you, send your name and address for our book.

Remember your \$5 is only on deposit until you decide. We also remind you that the very fact that this message appears here is in itself assurance that your deposit will come back to you pleasantly and promptly if you want it.





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EVERYTHING is comparative. The piano that ranked as the "best" production of its manufacturer twenty years ago is totally outclassed by the products of the same manufacturer to-day.

A piano that stands still is really going backwards. What is needed is a *basis of comparison for TO-DAY.*

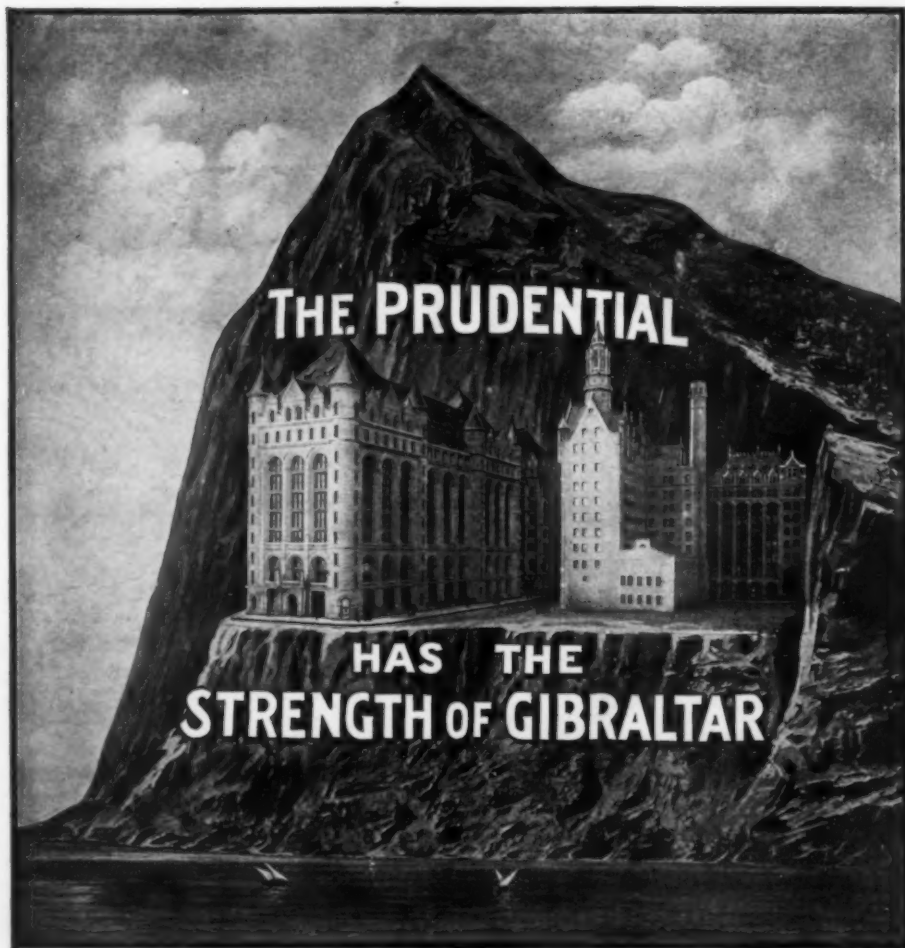
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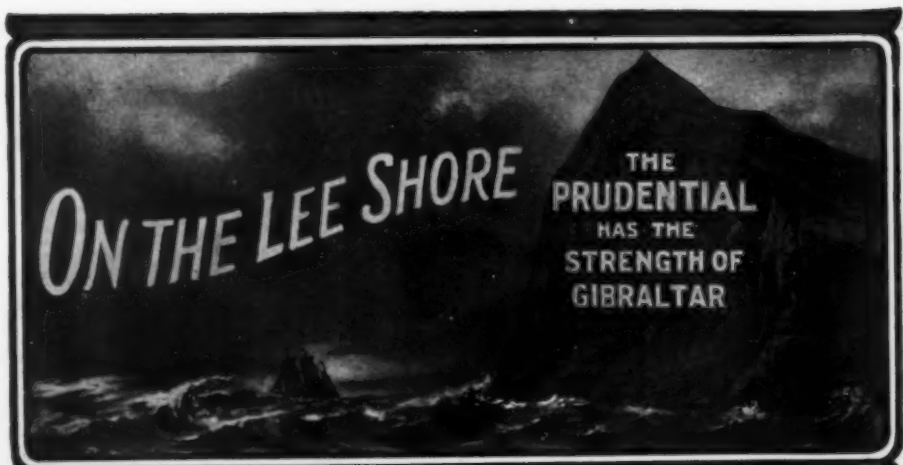
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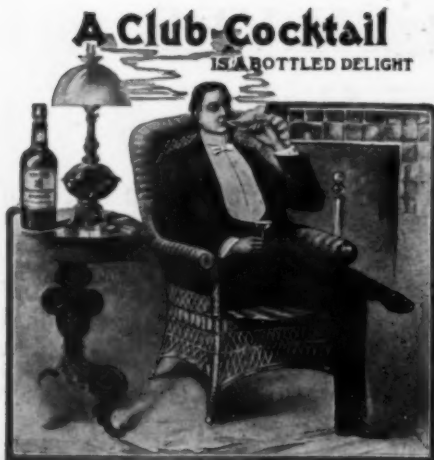
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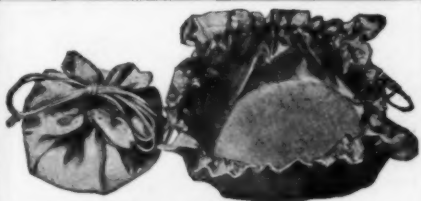
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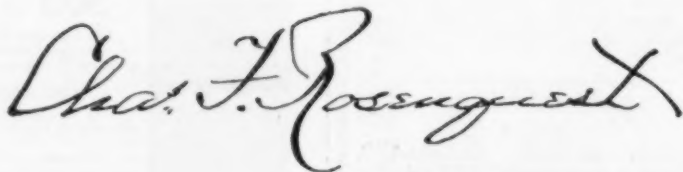
To Advertisers:

No Holiday or Christmas Issue ever published has excelled the TOWN TOPICS Holiday Number in its stories, essays, poems, witticisms and wealth of illustrations. The present year's issue, which will appear on *December 6th*, will by far exceed in interest and beauty the famous number of last year. It will contain 100 PAGES, and will appear as the regular issue of TOWN TOPICS of that week with the usual amount of social and other news, comment, etc., and 80 more pages of highly interesting matter by the leading writers of the day.

Based on the previous percentage of increase in circulation, the edition this year should far exceed 100,000. Advertisers in it will have the benefit of the readers of the regular issue of the paper and of the additional thousands who buy the Holiday Number.

The advertiser will pay *no more* than for the usual issue as *the regular rates* will apply to this great Holiday Number. Every advertisement will be placed in a most desirable position either alongside of or facing reading matter, but naturally there will be some preference in positions and whatever there is in this direction will of course be given to the earliest customer.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Chas. F. Rosengren'. The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large, sweeping 'C' at the beginning and a long, trailing flourish at the end.

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YOU WOULD NEVER BUY CIGARETTES

In the shop if you know how good our

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are. We are manufacturers and sell direct to the consumer. If you would like to try a really good Turkish or Egyptian Cigarette, send us \$1.50, \$2.00 or \$2.50, and we will send you 100, and, as a SPECIAL inducement, put your MONOGRAM on them free of charge.

The monogram and printing costs us more than we get for the first hundred, and we rely on the quality of our cigarettes bringing us duplicate, profit-bearing orders. If you are not satisfied, we shall be glad to return your money.

We could not afford to make you this offer if we did not make a GOOD CIGARETTE. Samples unmarked sent for 25 cents.

Booklet, "All About Made-to-Order Cigarettes," FREE.

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The Collar of Style,
Comfort and Long Wear
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They are made of "LINEN"—4-ply—are collar-shrunk (not piece-shrunk) by the London Town Process, come in ¼ sizes; actually the 25c. quality at

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They wear well, wash well,
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We back up our statement of all-around excellence by a warrantee bond banded around each collar, guaranteeing high quality.

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This famous Cordial, now made at Tarra-gona, Spain, was for centuries distilled by the Carthusian Monks (Pères Chartreux) at the Monastery of La Grande Chartreuse, France, and known throughout the world as Chartreuse. The above cut represents the bottle and label employed in the putting up of the article since the monks' expulsion from France, and it is now known as Liqueur Pères Chartreux (the monks, however, still retain the right to use the old bottle and label as well), distilled by the same order of monks who have securely guarded the secret of its manufacture for hundreds of years and who alone possess a knowledge of the elements of this delicious nectar.

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THE DAINTY COVERS

each month are of themselves works of art and excite the admiration of lovers of the beautiful. The October cover shown on the right of this advertisement in miniature is a fair example. It is printed in several colors and gold and cannot fail to please even the most particular person.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY OF BURR McINTOSH MONTHLY

The Hon. Jas. S. Clarkson, Surveyor of the Port of New York and an editor and publisher for more than 30 years, writes concerning the magazine: "Any one of taste could take the pictures in your April number—which I think is the finest collection and variety of pictures I have seen in any one magazine—and make any little home one of art and beauty by framing them. Good luck to you all in your good work. Our great America is behind in art more than anything else, and it is such fine work as people and magazines like you and yours are doing which is bringing our people up to something of a knowledge of art generally and to a finer appreciation of the beautiful in all things."



OCTOBER COVER DESIGN.

THE OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER ISSUES

will be the finest numbers ever printed of even this superb magazine. The October and November numbers will be found on all first class news stands and December number will be ready November 20th. Besides the magnificent pictures there will be enough of the best reading matter to preserve a pleasing balance.

OUR SPECIAL AND VERY LIBERAL OFFER

THE BURR McINTOSH MONTHLY is 25 cents a number, except the double Christmas numbers, which are always 50 cents a copy. If you will send \$3.00 to our address below for the year 1907, we will send you absolutely free the October, November, and December 1906 numbers; and for good measure we will also send you the Christmas 1904 number, conceded to be the most superb work of pictorial art ever issued in magazine form up to that time—a total retail value of \$4.75.

If you wish to know the magazine before accepting this offer, send us 25 cents for the October or November number, or buy it of your newsdealer.

OUR ART CALENDAR consists of 12 leaves printed in colors and bound with silk cord. Ready December 15th. Price One Dollar. As an extra inducement to you to accept the above offer we will send it if you will include 10 cents additional with your order—\$3.10 in all.

BURR PUBLISHING CO., M-4 W. 22d St., New York



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SECOND SEASON—ENTIRELY NEW EQUIPMENT

Solid Through Vestibuled Train Service
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VIA THE
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TEXAS & PACIFIC R'Y,
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SOUTH-BOUND.

Lv. ST. LOUIS.....	via IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	9.00 a.m., Tue.	Fri.
Lv. LITTLE ROCK.....	via IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	7.00 p.m., Tue.	Fri.
Lv. TEXARKANA.....	TEXAS & PACIFIC.....	11.40 p.m., Tue.	Fri.
Lv. LONGVIEW JUNCTION.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	3.40 a.m., Wed.	Sat.
Lv. PALESTINE.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	5.10 a.m., Wed.	Sat.
Lv. SAN ANTONIO.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	1.30 p.m., Wed.	Sat.
Lv. LAREDO.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	6.00 p.m., Wed.	Sat.
Lv. MONTEREY.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	11.35 p.m., Wed.	Sat.
Lv. SALTILLO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	2.45 a.m., Thur.	Sun.
Lv. CITY OF MEXICO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	8.30 p.m., Thur.	Sun.

NORTH-BOUND.

Lv. CITY OF MEXICO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	7.15 a.m., Wed.	Sat.
Lv. SALTILLO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	1.15 a.m., Thur.	Sun.
Lv. MONTEREY.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	4.15 a.m., Thur.	Sun.
Lv. LAREDO.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	11.15 a.m., Thur.	Sun.
Lv. SAN ANTONIO.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	4.15 p.m., Thur.	Sun.
Lv. PALESTINE.....	L. & G. N. R. R.....	12.05 a.m., Fri.	Mon.
Lv. LONGVIEW JUNCTION.....	TEXAS & PACIFIC.....	2.25 a.m., Fri.	Mon.
Lv. TEXARKANA.....	IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	5.35 a.m., Fri.	Mon.
Lv. LITTLE ROCK.....	IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	9.40 a.m., Fri.	Mon.
Lv. ST. LOUIS.....	IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	8.00 p.m., Fri.	Mon.

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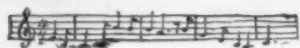
SMART SET ADVERTISER

You Can Not Buy This Picture



Drawn by G. Clyde Squires

Copyright, 1906, Life Publishing Company



An Old Love Song

The size of the charming picture (of which this is a reproduction in miniature) is 10½x15 inches. The large print is a sepia photographure, plate marked. It is hand-printed on Exora steel-plate paper, 19x24, ready for framing.

The Picture Will Not Be Sold

But the large print will be delivered, carriage prepaid, to **every** new subscriber to LIFE at \$5.00 a year, if we receive the remittance before February 1, 1907.

TO THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED SUBSCRIBERS.—The first one hundred proofs of the picture will be numbered, bearing remarque and artist's signature. They will be printed on India paper and will be sent to the first one hundred new subscribers under this offer.

In place of "An Old Love Song," new subscribers may, if they so prefer, select prints from our catalogue to the value of \$2.50. The handsome little catalogue of LIFE'S PRINTS, with miniature reproductions of 127 drawings, will be sent to any address on application.

LIFE PUBLISHING COMPANY, 23 West 31st Street, NEW YORK CITY



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RUSSIAN
CIGARETTS**

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sold on merit alone, these cigarettes are
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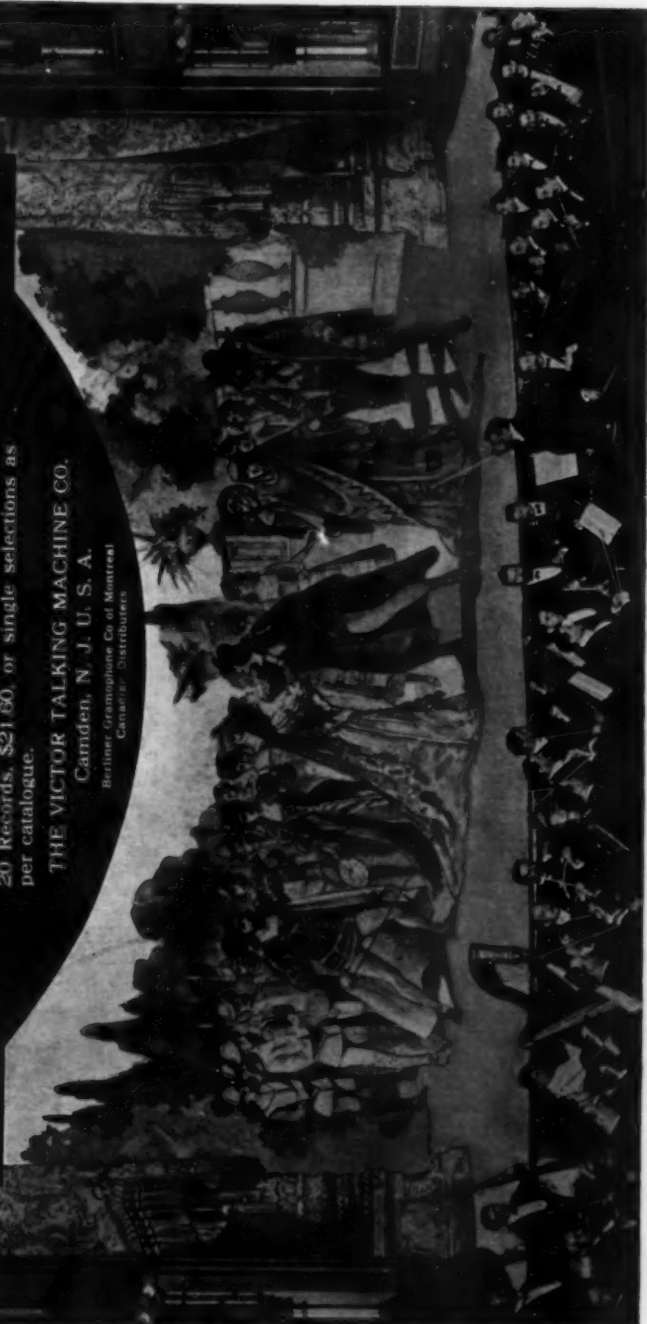
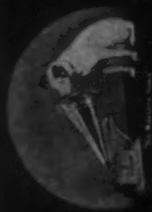
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CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1906.

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This article, which is a continuation of the one in the October number, is illustrated by many portraits of American ladies well-known in the French capital, including:

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will have among its contributors a longer list than usual of well-known names. Authors who have won established reputations are comparatively few and hence the competition for their work is keen. Some of

the names that will appear in the November number are: **Baroness Orczy**, **Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd**, **Kate Jordan**, **H. B. Marriott-Watson**, **Constance Smedley**, **Mary Moss**, **Margaret Sutton Briscoe**, **Caroline Duer**.

But names are not all. The stories will be of the first quality. The novelette, "*Beau Brocade*," by **Baroness Orczy**, is a romance of great dramatic power and unusual literary excellence.

A short story, "*Folly Farm*," by **Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd**, will probably be considered next in importance. **H. B. Marriott-Watson**, in "*The Prince's Pictures*," tells an absorbing story of adventure in a style far removed from the stereotyped adventure story. "*The Feet of Youth*," by **Kate Jordan**, is as attractive as its title indicates. "*Her Only Chance*," by **Caroline Duer** and another, "*H. Otway Presents*," by **Mary Moss**, "*The Stony Path*," by **Constance Smedley**, "*A Successor to Susan*," by **Sarah Guernsey Bradley**, are among the other short stories. **Margaret Sutton Briscoe** and **Lady Broome** contribute the essays. An unusually interesting dramatic article by **Channing Pollock**, and fine poems by **Curtis Hidden Page**, **Madeline Bridges**, **John Curtis Underwood** and others complete a very exceptional number.

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PROFITABLE INVESTMENT FEATURES OF LIFE INSURANCE

By S. A. Nelson

INVESTMENT is defined as "the act of investing or laying out money productively, or converting capital especially in a permanent manner; also the money or capital so invested, or the property invested in." Life insurance investments are in a distinct class of themselves. They differ from investments in real estate, railroad, industrial and other securities and in business enterprises of one kind and another. They should always be differentiated and considered as in a separate class. Two of their important advantages are stability and permanency. Many ordinary investments accessible to the average investor are to be condemned, but when care is exercised in the selection of a company, the life insurance investment, principal considered, is as safe and stable as a deposit in a savings bank. The whole life insurance structure is based on its permanency. It is not attended by the risks that usually accompany the average investment. Yet another advantage is accessibility to every investor, no matter how large or small his resources may be. Life insurance appeals to the large as well as the small buyer, but it is more important to the latter. A life insurance investment presupposes that the investor in calculating the returns makes due allowance for the protection he receives in being insured. When this is done the advantages of such an investment, when made in a sound institution, The Prudential Insurance Company, Newark, N. J., for example, are apparent. The buyers of securities, whether they be stocks or bonds; or insurance, whether they be life or fire policies, are notoriously careless in investigating and understanding exactly what they buy. Recently convertible bonds of the St. Paul and Union Pacific railroad companies matured. Their owners had the option of convertibility into common stock

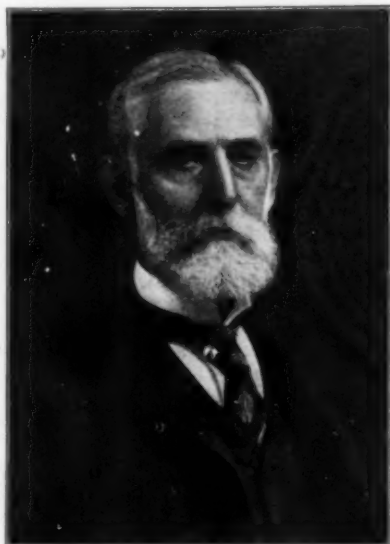
or accepting a fixed cash return. The former was the more profitable operation, and yet in one instance holders of almost \$1,000,000 in bonds failed to take advantage of their opportunity, simply because they had failed to read and understand the text printed on the bond. The same statements apply to insurance, and every buyer of a policy should investigate and understand exactly what he is buying.

In this country the path of the small investor is strewn with difficulties. Financial adventurers make elaborate plans to trap him with fraudulent schemes; the large dealers in investment securities ignore him, as do the municipalities which dispose of millions of bonds on "all or none" bids. Had the millions of dollars exchanged by small investors for worthless mining stocks and stocks in other bankrupt or unsuccessful industrial corporations been diverted to the purpose of life insurance, the sum total of national happiness would be much greater. The amateur speculator in shares on margin, the bucket shop proprietor and the fraudulent seller of sham investment securities, to say nothing of the promoters of "get rich quick" propositions, have wasted what in the aggregate must be a vast sum of money.

The small investor of today finds much trouble in making and caring for his investments; he is at a disadvantage when compared with the large investor whose investments may, and often do, cover a wide range, and almost invariably life insurance is included in the list. The highest grade bonds can be had by the average investor in a retail way on a retail price basis, which means that he must pay the highest market price. Large issues of such bonds are generally sold on "all or none bids" to syndicates which in turn sell them at an advance to estates and individuals. Sold "over the counter," the buyer of a \$1,000 bond pays

more when he buys and accepts less when he sells than the large investor, because he trades in an "odd lot," and when in final possession the interest return is decidedly small; and if it is large he has the questionable satisfaction of recalling the adage that "the greater the returns the greater the risk." As this becomes more of an investing country, which it is destined to do, it is probable that the best bonds will be sold in much smaller denominations than at the present; in the meantime, the small investor finds that he receives scant attention from the leading dealers in prime investments which are above suspicion.

The savings bank, the building and loan association, the real estate venture, each has advantages and disadvantages for the small buyer. Large investments are based on stability and permanency, interest yield, and negotiability. The Prudential Insurance Company, just as a savings bank, is a very large investor. It buys securities of the highest grade in a wholesale way. The investor in a policy participates in those purchases to the extent of his policy, less the proportionate cost of insurance operation of the company. Recent events have caused buyers of insurance to give more careful scrutiny to the cost of insurance, the form of policy and the strength of the company issuing the certificate. This is as it should be. It will lead to a better understanding between the principals to the transaction. There will be less sensationalism in the sale of investment insurance and a keener appreciation of the value of a small but safe interest return, when combined with insurance protection. The Prudential Insurance Company invites a careful scrutiny of its conditions, methods and plans of insurance.



U. S. Senator John F. Dryden
President, The Prudential Insurance Co. of America

It is essential to the welfare of the average small investor, although he does not always realize the fact, that he should be insured against his own weaknesses. Anyone with any Wall Street experience whatever knows that many men would be much better off in a financial sense if their investments were permanent. Possessing readily salable investments, they have been tempted to embark in speculation or to exchange a sound for an unsound investment. When a man invests in life insurance he regards that investment as a permanent trust fund. It is not something that he

wishes to sell in order to get into something that is supposed to be better.

It is the best thing, under Prudential conditions, that he can buy. When a man invests in life insurance he begins to cultivate that most important habit, the saving habit. Saving becomes compulsory. Some of us have started at interesting periods in our career to insure ourselves, and we know, too, that it is a simple and easy matter to divert this special saving fund into a channel of disbursement.

A bill must be paid, there is a promising speculation, or a necessity arises which we had not considered, when, behold, we have spent that which formed the basis of our most excellent resolutions. The holder of a life insurance policy, however, first of all, makes adequate provision for his payments, and having done so feels that his duty has been well performed, for he knows that his savings are safe. He knows that he has acquired protection for his family and a permanent investment that is not to be dissipated to satisfy a caprice or the friend "with a tip."

Conservative bankers and brokers know that it requires courage and conviction to recommend investments, especially for small investors; in fact, nowadays it is easier to condemn than to praise. It requires no courage to recommend life insurance for one already has the conviction, many of us having had the experience that teaches us that in at least one sense it is the wisest of all financial investments. The average business man usually employs three plans of investment that he regards as safe, permanent and profitable. They are: (1) the ownership of his home; (2) the savings bank account, and (3) life insurance. He often differs regarding their order of merit or their relative importance. He may own one and not the others, and often the one he owns to the exclusion of the others is the insurance policy.

A moderately prosperous New York merchant has a number of small investments consisting chiefly of railroad stocks and bonds in lots of 10 to 50 shares and 1 to 5 bonds. He owns his own home, which is in Brooklyn. Not long ago he was obliged to remove from Brooklyn and he endeavored to sell his house, but could only do so at a substantial sacrifice. Commenting on the loss he said: "The only investment I have that never worries me is my life insurance. How about my stocks and bonds? Well, you rarely get through a year without worrying about them. Instead of selling my stocks in 1902, or simply keeping them, I bought more at the top and now my interest yield is very small. Recently I sold several bonds of a terminal company at a loss and so the reinvestment problem is always with you. You often act on the opinion of a man whose judgment of security values is as superficial as your own. Life insurance protects a man against himself and that is a factor that many of us do not consider at its actual value."

On another occasion a perplexed investor remarked: "When one considers the number of railroad collateral trust bonds and the security behind them, he feels that it requires an expert to determine their value. As far as the newer industrials are concerned, their future value is problematical. So many contingencies enter into the calculation that the buyer must reckon on more or less worry as part of the bargain. Before

a new security ceases to be speculative it must pay regular dividends over a period of years that includes good times and bad. Having done that it sells on an investment basis and the interest yield is very small. The new shares and bonds which are based on prospective value and offered the investing public have no end and the investor of moderate means can employ no discrimination in considering them but must reject them all."

"I never realized," said another New Yorker recently, "what a good investment a life insurance policy is until my application was rejected."

The Prudential Insurance Company offers buyers of life insurance a number of policies including the whole life policy, the limited payment policy, the intermediate policy, the endowment policy, the guaranteed 5 per cent. 20-year insurance endowment bond policy and the 5 per cent. gold insurance bond policy. Industrial insurance, children's endowments and annuities are also issued by The Prudential. Considered in their regular order as follows, each possesses an investment feature peculiar to itself:

(a) The whole life policy is life insurance in its simplest form. Premiums are paid during life and the amount insured is paid at death.

(b) The limited payment life policy is a popular form of insurance. Premiums are payable for a determined period of 10, 15 or 20 years, or until death, if it occurs within the period. If the insured survives the period the policy is continued in force without further payment by the policyholder and the amount insured is paid at death.

(c) The endowment policy possesses an investment feature aside from the insurance. It enables a person to provide for old age; it inculcates the saving habit in young men, and when the policy matures gives him capital with which to embark in business. In the interval one is always insured and thus a two-fold object may be accomplished. It provides for the payment at the end of the endowment period to the person insured of the sum named in the policy, or the amount of the policy, in the event of death, to the beneficiary.

All the foregoing policies may be obtained

either on a non-participating basis or on the accumulative, five-year or annual dividend plans.

(d) The guaranteed 5 per cent. 20-year endowment policies also contain investment features aside from the insurance.

If the insured survive the endowment period of 20 years, the initial sum together with the accumulated guaranteed additions becomes payable to him in cash. Under the policy the sum insured is increased each year by a guaranteed addition of 5 per cent. If the insured die within the endowment period, The Prudential will pay the full value of the bond together with \$50 per \$1,000 of original insurance for each year's premium that has been paid; but if he survive the endowment period he will receive in cash twice the initial sum, and other methods of settlement are open to him.

(e) The 5 per cent. gold insurance bond policy provides for bonds issued in the single denomination of \$1,000 and in numbers from 1 to 100. The terms of the contract are simple and cannot mystify any one of average intelligence. The title of the contract is not "gold bond," but "gold bond policy" prefixed by the name of the kind of policy it may be, such as whole life, endowment, etc. Its distinguishing feature is the method of settlement at maturity.

The gold bond policy provides for the issuance of interest bearing gold bonds in lieu of a cash payment. The bonds are issued in amounts of \$1,000 for each amount of \$1,313 of insurance and bear interest at the rate of 5 per cent. of their face value (\$1,000), payable semi-annually in advance. The bonds are 5 per cent. bonds.

If a gold bond policy on the life plan be considered solely from an investment point of view, the question of net return on the money cannot, as a matter of course, be determined until the policy matures by death. If the policy be on the endowment plan and mature as an endowment, the cost of insurance protection should be allowed for in computing the net return.

The method of settlement by the issue of bonds is one of several devised to meet a demand, which while of considerable proportions is not comparable in volume to the demand for straight life insurance. The bonds after issue may be disposed of singly

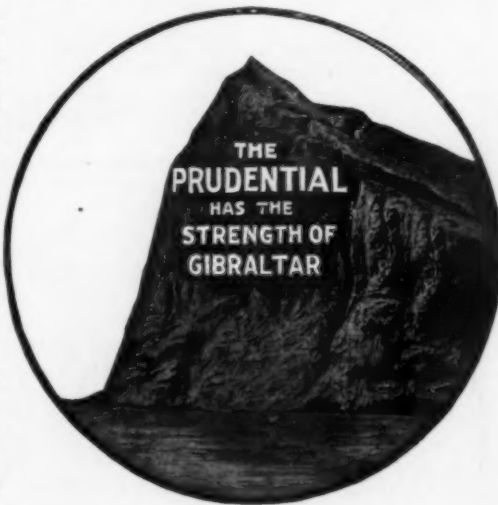
or en bloc at a minimum selling price to the company issuing them.

On all the foregoing policies cash loans, paid-up insurance and other values are provided for.

(f) Children's endowment policies are based on the desire to make adequate provision for the education of a youth, to provide capital to start a young man in business or to give a daughter a dowry at marriage.

(g) Life annuities, sometimes called income policies, are more popular in England than in the United States: A man, aged 65, for example, can obtain from The Prudential for a single payment of \$5,000 an annual income for the remainder of his life of \$563.05 or about 11 per cent. per annum of the amount invested.

In conclusion it must also be remembered that policies today are more liberal in their provisions than they were 15 years ago. The writer is of the opinion, that the strongest views and the ones really worth having regarding the value and results of life insurance as an investment are those of policyholders in different parts of the country. Those interested, who care to pursue the subject farther, can obtain from The Prudential, as did the writer, the testimony of satisfied policyholders of varying ages and condition in widely separated communities.





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By John Hughes

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During the last score of years the copper mines of the United States and Mexico have paid in actual dividends \$300,000,000. Since January 1 of this year ten copper companies alone have distributed in earnings nearly \$19,000,000. The fact is that copper mines are paying one-half of the total dividends paid by the entire mining industry.

The mining of copper is making more millionaires than any other industry in the world, and is making them quicker. One mine in Arizona is paying annually \$10,000,000 in profits and has made millionaires of its stockholders. Several copper mines in Arizona and Mexico are paying from 100 per cent. to 3,300 per cent. on an investment made only a few years ago. The man who invested \$1,000 in the Calumet & Arizona of Arizona, four years ago, now has a snug fortune worth \$33,000 and is receiving in annual dividends the sum of \$4,800.

No metal of all metals is in such demand in the whole world as is copper. The enormous increase in the consumption and the rise in price of this metal have been coincident with the vast extension of the uses of electricity throughout the United States and Europe. The consumption of brass is growing rapidly and brass is two-thirds copper. The growing consumption of this metal can bring about but one result, and

that is the continual rise of the price of copper and the rapidly growing profits of those who own stocks in copper mines. These are vital facts to those who wish to make investments that will pay certain profits and the largest profits possible. A copper mine is a plain, commercial proposition, not a speculation.

The richest copper section in the world is the Sonora Copper Belt. It extends through Arizona and across the Mexican border, southward through the State of Sonora, Mexico. On it are some of the most productive and profitable mines that the world has ever known. Among these are the United Verde, owned by Senator William A. Clark of Montana, which pays \$1,000,000 a month; the Copper Queen, which earns \$10,000,000 a year; the Calumet & Arizona, paying dividends of \$2,400,000 a year; the Greene Consolidated, which earns and distributes to stockholders a like amount; the Shannon, the Old Dominion, and others. These are a few of the mines of the Sonora copper belt which are heaping up fortunes for those who bought their stocks when these mines were beginning operations.

Sonora, Mexico, has richer and larger deposits of copper than those of Arizona. E. H. Harriman, the prominent railroad magnate of the United States, and the Phelps-Dodge Company, owners of the great Copper Queen and other rich mines and large smelters in Arizona and Northern Mexico, are now rapidly constructing railroads which are opening this new, rich copper field to enormous mineral operations. Their railroad construction has started a

rush of mining men to Sonora, Mexico, and the best mines are fast being taken up. Among the largest and richest properties in Sonora is that owned by the Anaconda Sonora Copper Company, which is composed of a number of prominent business men of St. Paul and Chicago. Already in this property \$5,250,000 worth of ore has been blocked out, and it was located before this active railroad construction began. The opportunity which the Anaconda Sonora Copper Company accepted then does not exist in the State of Sonora now.

To make large profits on a small outlay of money in copper, one must purchase shares from a company which has just begun operations, but which can prove that it has great deposits of the metal and which is selling its shares at a low price in order to obtain funds to purchase equipment and enlarge its operations. After it begins earning money from its own production, the stock in such a company cannot be bought excepting at a very high price. The men who control the Anaconda Sonora Copper Company have offered to the public a small number of shares at a low price, to add to the sum which the members of the Company themselves invested for the purpose

of completing their equipment at the property. It would be well for you to write to Mr. William S. Barbee, Secretary and Treasurer, 827 National Life Building, Chicago, and ask for information concerning the opportunities in Sonora, Mexico, and the Anaconda Sonora Mine. This property has already attracted wide attention in mining circles because it has such large bodies of ore of a very high grade.

NOTE:—The advancing price of copper and the growing demand and consumption of the metal have made copper mines, particularly those in the new field of Sonora, Mexico, the most sought after of all mineral properties. English, German and American syndicates have endeavored to purchase the Anaconda Sonora mine outright, after they had examined the property and its ores; but the owners have refused to sell because they desire to keep it for their stockholders and themselves, making it a source of large and regular income for themselves and their estates. Mr. Barbee can give you documentary proof of all that has been said above, if you write to him now. The Company is sound financially; its control is in the hands of men of the highest personal and business standing; and it is preparing rapidly to produce earnings on an extensive scale.

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Have we, as a nation, while physically brave, retrograded to mere moral cowards—too fearful of disturbing the commercial equanimity of a few money-grubbers? Or shall we halt the iniquitous system of "child labor" and give the nation's future citizens and mothers a chance to be real citizens and mothers?

In October COSMOPOLITAN is the second of the Markham series of articles—"The Hoe-Man in the Making." The first article (in September) was entitled "The Child at the Loom." In October COSMOPOLITAN is "Child-Wrecking in the Glass-Factories."

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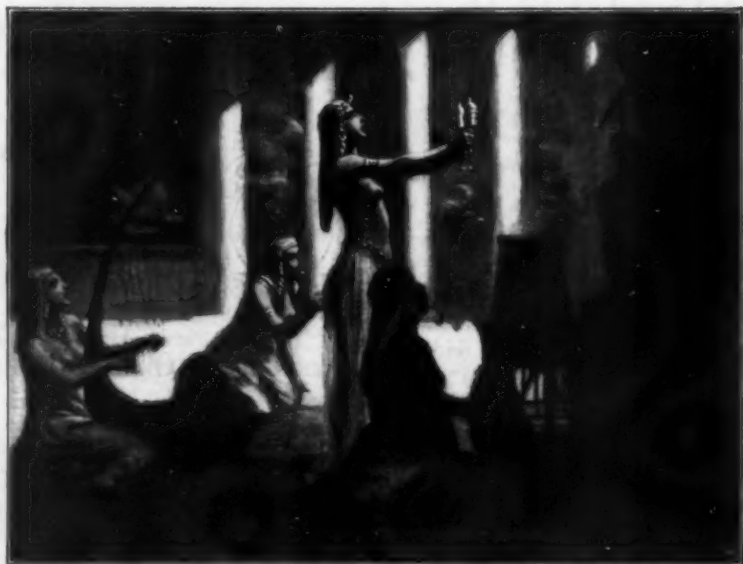
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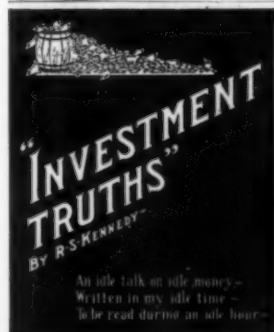
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¶ Here, under your very eye, slavery of children! The pity, the shame, the horror of a condition which permits children to come into this great, beautiful world—and slavery—industrial slavery! And there are over 2,000,-

000 of them. It is horror enough that men and women are industrial slaves—but children—!

¶ Think of it,—little ones with no time for play, no time for sunshine and laughter, no time for books and school—but time only for ignorance and sorrow and work—**WORK** that the money-grubbers may get more money.

¶ In the September Cosmopolitan is the first article of the series by Edwin Markham—"The Child at the Loom."

¶ At the looms of the cotton mills, there they stand, wan little figures, day in and day out, in the choking, blinding, gloomy, deafening room, until disease—in most cases the "Great White Plague"—slowly, cruelly squeezes out of their frail bodies all the vitality that the mill-owners have left—and they live just as long as the disease lasts.

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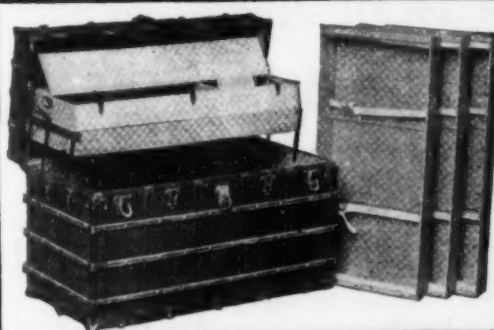
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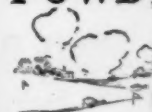
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